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# PARADOXES

OF A

## PHILISTINE.

BY

WM. S. WALSH.

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PHILADELPHIA:

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY.

1889.

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## BY WAY OF WARNING.

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*Nearly all these essays have already appeared in print,—a page or so in the Atlantic Monthly, a couple of chapters in American Notes and Queries, and the remainder in Lippincott's Magazine. They are here collected because the author likes them, and wants them in some form convenient for re-reading.*

THE PHILISTINE.



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# PARADOXES OF A PHILISTINE.

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## APOLOGIA.

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No word is so little understood as the word Paradox. It is usually held to be a synonyme for flippant smartness, and is applied to sayings which have a surface appearance of truth, but are fundamentally false. The real meaning of the word is exactly the opposite. Thus Worcester's Dictionary defines it as "a proposition or assertion which seems to be absurd, or at variance with common sense, or to contradict some previously-ascertained truth, but which is nevertheless true in fact." The definitions in other dictionaries are substantially the same.

As to the word Philistine, there is no consensus of opinion. If ever a historian of Philistines should arise, like the famous historian of Suobs, he will have to avow on the title-page that the book is by "one of themselves." For,

upon the current definitions, there is none of us who is free of the taint. Matthew Arnold himself, the self-appointed crusader against Philistinism, has been proved to be a Philistine by Swinburne. It is said that the note of provincialism, or insularity, is the great test; that the term includes all those who cannot love, admire, or worship without hedging in their love, admiration, or worship with hatred, contempt, dislike of everything exterior to the immediate object of those affections. The traditional John Bull, whose love of England is compounded with hatred of foreigners, has always been held up as an archetype of the class. But even the Greeks and Romans were sufficiently barbarous to hold all people barbarians except themselves. And which one of the modern nations is exempt from this failing? Their patriotic songs—the “Marseillaise,” “Rule Britannia,” “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “Die Wacht am Rhein”—are choice specimens of Philistine bombast.

Coming down from nations to individuals, this definition of Philistine would include all those who look upon themselves and their belongings as the most interesting facts in the inhabited globe; all those who gaze at the world through a pin-hole and imagine that the view from their pin-hole represents the universe; all

those who cannot divest their minds of the "shop," whether it be the tailor who looks upon all his fellows as mere clothes-horses for the display of his own manufactures, or the artist who insists upon the sacredness of his calling and the general ignobleness of the rest of the avocations of men. It would include that school of Genius with a big G of which Bulwer in some of the moods of his mind is the most offensive exemplar, as well as that cheap sort of pessimists who despair of the race whenever they examine their neighbor's heart, and who make up for the severely-virtuous standard which they hold up for their neighbor's guidance by a genial, large-hearted charity for their own weaknesses. It would include all those who mistake individual preferences for general principles. It would include Byron and Shelley; it would not be difficult to show that it would include the nobler minds of Carlyle and Ruskin. And if the whole of mankind have not already been marshalled under the banner of Philistinism, the remainder could very easily be proved to belong there by that other definition which is the favorite formula of advanced thinkers,—that Philistinism means an indifference to the higher intellectual interests. When Carlyle denies to Walter Scott the epithet of great, because "his life was worldly, his ambitions

worldly;" because "the great mystery of existence was not great to him, did not drive him into rocky solitudes to wrestle with it for an answer," etc., and then adds that "our best definition of Scott were perhaps even this, that he was, if no great man, then something much pleasanter to be, a robust, thoroughly healthy, and withal very prosperous and victorious man," he simply means to say that Scott was a Philistine. And Emerson's criticism of Macaulay gives us a neat summary of the Philistine theory of life: "The brilliant Macaulay," he says, "explicitly teaches that *good* means good to eat, good to wear, material commodity." Macaulay, indeed, has so long been given up on all hands as a specimen of hopeless Philistinism, — the marvellously wrong-headed ingenuity of his Bacon essay condemning him with the thinkers, and the bigotry of his political and literary partisanship with all other men, — that it comes upon one with the freshness of a new sensation to find anybody undertaking to relieve him from the stigma. Such a sensation was afforded some years ago by Karl Hillebrand.

"The word *Philistine*," said Mr. Hillebrand, "is a new expression taken from the German; and if an Englishman uses it he is bound to



use it in the German sense, or to declare he gives it another sense. . . . This word, indeed, has always kept in the German mind something of its origin,—the opposition to the liberty and Bohemian life of the student. What constitutes *Philistinism* is pedantic regularity of habits, both in life and thought, prosiness, want of enthusiasm, narrowness of social and intellectual horizon, a certain mild conventionalism, and timid shrinking from paradox, noise, and fantasy. Never was there a man less *Philistine* than the dashing, bustling, passionate Whig, whose ponderous rhetoric charmed the youth of our generation throughout the civilized world.”

After all, I wonder if we won't have to fall back upon Mr. Leslie Stephen's definition as the most satisfactory,—namely, that it is a term of abuse given by prigs to the rest of their species for being a shade more manly than themselves.

The title of this little book, consequently, is not half so modest as it appears to be. Translated, it would seem to mean “Unrecognized Truths by an Anti-Prig.”

## PHILOSOPHERS AND FOOLS.

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“WHAT fools these mortals be!” says Puck, and, indeed, to a higher order of beings we can present no very heroic appearance. Dear brother reader, even you and I,—you and I who have such excellent reasons for holding ourselves better than our fellow-mortals,—even we are fools. The ceaseless gabble of our tongues must be amusing enough to angelic ears. We all talk nonsense, even when we are proudest of our intellectual powers. Some of us talk nonsense that we have heard from others, and then the world calls it common sense; some of us talk nonsense out of our own heads, and then the world is undecided whether we are geniuses or dunces, and talks an immense amount of additional nonsense before the point is determined. But to genius as to dunce the great lesson of life is that he knows nothing, that the only wisdom is a recognition of his ignorance. Shakespeare, Goethe, Dante, George Eliot,—these be great names to us little men. The greatest is only like St. Augustine, gathering a few shells on the sand, while the in-

finite, mysterious, fathomless ocean stretches unexplored and unexplorable before them. We speak reverently of their knowledge of the heart, of their insight into character. What does any poet or novelist of them all really know of the abysmal depths of personality? Sometimes when they paint a hero we may find, in this or that heroic quality, in this or that amiable weakness, a faint reflex of some characteristic we recognize in ourselves, or when they paint a seamp we may find a tolerably accurate representation of our neighbor. But then we know little about our neighbor, and less about ourselves.

“What a world this would be,” says Christopher North, “were all its inhabitants to fiddle like Paganini, ride like Ducrow, discourse like Coleridge, and do everything else in a style of equal perfection!” Nay, good Christopher, the world would remain the same old dull commonplace world. Our standard would be raised, that is all. If every one rode like Ducrow, no one would stop a moment to look at Ducrow; if every one fiddled like Paganini, Paganini’s fiddle would be complained of by the neighbors as a nuisance; if every one discoursed like Coleridge, Coleridge would be voted an intolerable bore. We give our admiration to intel-

lectual performances that are rare and difficult. The moment the rarity and the difficulty disappear our admiration also disappears, we seek fresh idols to worship. If the average physical standard of the race were suddenly to be raised to—say ten feet, the noble Chang, who is now a Colossus, would become a dwarf. Political economists tell us that the discovery of a new gold-mine would in no wise increase the wealth of the world. If there were two dollars in circulation for every one at present, two dollars would buy no more than one dollar does now. See the different degrees of admiration accorded to men. In every village tavern you find political magnates who between “chaws” and drinks astonish the gaping by-standers with the magnitude of their knowledge as compared with the size of their heads. Canning used to say that the awe and admiration which a sixth-form boy excites from the members of lower classes are greater than he could ever again hope to obtain if he rose to be prime-minister. Country lawyers, country doctors, country parsons, country school-teachers, who have astonished their neighborhood without perceptibly impressing the outside world, settle the affairs of America, the disputes of foreign nations, literature, philosophy, and theology, over their own domestic hearth-stones, and many a simple mind has no

doubt wondered whether Bismarck, Cleveland, Gladstone, or the Pope might not gain useful hints by hearkening to Paterfamilias. Well, the great historian, the great poet, the great statesman, the great philosopher, whose names are familiar words in our mouths, are as fallible and as foolish as Paterfamilias, as the sixth-form boy, as the village magnate, as you and I are. The intellectual feats that they perform only happen to be more difficult to the average man, that is all. But all is folly and vanity,—the gabble of fools. Yea, my brother. Let us go up on the house-tops with Carlyle and shout the great gospel of silence.

Or, rather, let us take to ourselves the lesson of humility in lieu of preaching it to others. Let us recognize that though all codes are temporary and may be revolutionized to-morrow, yet the higher code of to-day, retrograde even though it be in some aspects, faulty and foolish in all aspects as it may appear to the wiser generations that shall follow us, is the highest code that the human race has so far evolved out of chaos, and let us refrain from returning to chaos because of any faults and follies we may discern in it. Let us recognize, also, that, though there is no absolute greatness, there *is* relative greatness; that though in the

face of the Infinite all men are puny, insignificant, and foolish, yet in a world where seven feet makes a giant it behooves us lesser men to look up to those who have surpassed the normal standard. Hero-worship is folly, but it is the sort of folly that helps us fools in our struggle after wisdom.

Let our humility extend still further. Let us recognize all workers who are above the ordinary grade of intelligence as in the vanguard of humanity, as pioneers of the future. It is fashionable to sneer at this or that popular novelist, to style him a purveyor of trash. Well, good reader, the popular novelist is a more valuable citizen than the man who does nothing, but only sneers. He is in some way—mysterious, it may be, to us—helpful to a number of excellent and well-meaning human beings. Even the nine days' wonder does good work within the limit of his nine days. Do not let us compare every one by the standard of Shakespeare, Dante, or George Eliot. The men of the hour are sufficient for the hour. Few, perhaps, of our living writers will survive for the future, but that need not deter the children of the present from recognizing their worth. A sliding scale is indispensable for correct judgment. It is significant how we in-

stinctively adjust this sliding scale to all matters of every-day life. We call Jones or Robinson a brilliant conversationalist, when he only offers us a dim reflex of the books that, mayhap, we sneer at. We give the ready guerdon of a laugh to jests which would look poor enough in type. On the amateur stage we applaud performances which we would not tolerate before the real foot-lights.



## THE DEMOCRACY OF THE INTELLECT.

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DEMOCRACY is in. It will not be long before the opening assertion of our Declaration of Independence, "all men are created equal," which was sometime a paradox, will be accepted as the self-evident truth the Declaration proclaims it to be. Primitive men (and the history of primitive men finds a faint repetition in the young people of all ages, even of to-day) loved to emphasize and to localize their emotions, to have something tangible to love and worship; something tangible to hate; to love and to hate intensely. They liked to have their blacks very black and their whites very white. Their rulers were awful and terrible beings, made of different clay from the subjects they governed, tracing their descent or their authority direct from heaven. Their heroes were demi-gods. Their poets were seers and prophets, whose words were inspired, whose writings were sacred. To be sure, the imagination even of primitive men had to be guarded from too close a contact with the object of its admiration. The monarch was shorn of a large portion of his



divinity to the flatterers who thrived upon his weaknesses. The demi-god received his apotheosis only after death. The prophet was not honored in his own country. The hero was no hero to his body-servant. The entire history of the race shows a closer drawing together of individuals, so that old illusions and old superstitions have one by one taken their flight and men have been gradually learning to recognize their brotherhood, their substantial equality.

Only two centuries ago wise and learned men were still prating about the divine right of kings, and urging implicit obedience upon subjects. To-day royalty retains the merest semblance of power and authority,—is

Made only great by every one conniving,—

and the eye that winks at it has a humorous light which augurs a speedy termination to the farce. Elizabeth's voice was virtually law. Victoria has hardly as much to do with the government of her realm as the meanest householder in Great Britain who possesses a vote. The House of Lords, once a power in the land, has been described by one of England's latest historians as "a sham legislative assembly," and the House of Commons has usurped all its

real authority. Hereditary aristocracy is fast losing its prestige. Men are no longer divided into lords and vassals, into masters and slaves. It may not take many more centuries to relegate all distinctions of caste into the limbo of outworn superstitions.

There are signs that the ideas of equality which are invading politics and social life are at work with their levelling influences in mental life as well. The aristocracy of intellect may become as antiquated as the aristocracy of the peerage. The old divisions of mankind into dunces and men of genius, into Philistines and children of light, are becoming offensive to us. When Bulwer, the last of a bad school, talks about "Genius, the Child of the Gods," we feel the same rising of the gorge that afflicts us when some poor ranting actor approaches the foot-lights and mouths for the applause of the gallery. We are beginning to doubt whether there is any such great difference between one man and another as our fathers were fond of imagining. The vital force which feeds the brain of the thinker is the same force that animates the muscle of the athlete. Some men may, indeed, be born with more vitality than others, but the form in which that vitality shall assert itself is determined by the accident of

environment or hereditary predisposition. If it goes to build up the muscles there will be less left for the brain. If too large a proportion goes into the brain the body will suffer. Or if it goes into any special faculty of brain or body the other faculties will suffer. There are certain tribes of Indians who are marvellous horsemen because for generations all their vitality has been expended on the muscles that are brought into play by horsemanship. But the other muscles suffer in proportion. These Indians cannot walk a hundred yards without fatigue. The blacksmith's arm, the ballet-dancer's leg, are splendidly developed, the rest of the body may be only ordinary.

As with the physical so with the mental man. A genius is a person in whom some one faculty or set of faculties has been abnormally developed at the expense of the rest of the brain or at the expense of the body. Eccentricity is commonly looked upon as an accompaniment of genius. Eccentricity is mental incompleteness. Another accompaniment may be a want of practicality, an inability to cope with the common life around one, an acute shyness and sensitiveness in the company of one's fellows, all which simply indicates a further limitation of the intellect. Or the man of genius is

sickly, weak, dwarfed or deformed in body. Or, lastly, the tax which his genius must pay to his body is that his procreative powers shall suffer, so that he will have no children, or his children will be below the average in intelligence, or they will inherit their mental characteristics from the more commonplace mate.

Yet, though the net sum of a famous man's qualities and defects may in reality be no greater than those of his commonplace brother, there need be no diminution of admiration and reverence towards the work which he is enabled to do. The power and authority once summed up in a king, which constituted the divinity that hedged him in, are in these days distributed over the commonwealth. What the king loses, humanity gains. So what the individual genius loses in our esteem, humanity gains. Our admiration is transferred from men to man. A great work of art is no longer the product of a mysterious and inexplicable "Genius," apart from and different from the race, a "Child of the Gods," but simply an evidence of what human intelligence can do at high pressure. And if we believe in that bugbear of Mr. Carlyle's, the progress of the species, and hold that the high pressure of the present represents the ordinary achievement of the future, we can

find much in these reflections to comfort and strengthen us in our faith.

Take the case of Shelley, whose life has recently been told by Dr. Dowden. Now, what is the impression of Shelley which this biography leaves upon us? He seems a strange mixture of strength and weakness, of great qualities and littlenesses. He had an unquenchable thirst for beauty, for truth, an unquenchable love for his fellows, a noble generosity which was proof against all offences, even against the meanest ingratitude, even against the attempted seduction of his wife by his nearest and most trusted friend. And he had such marvellous lyrical powers as are rarely given to more than one man in a generation. But to offset these qualities he had strange infirmities. To the end of his days he retained all the *naïveté* of a child, a beautiful trait indeed from the picturesque point of view, but which shows that some of his mental faculties were in the rudimentary condition of childhood. There was only a thin partition between his wit and madness; and madness is a disease, and disease is weakness. He was effeminate, arrogant, headstrong. His crude hatred of Christianity and of the social institutions which are an offshoot from Christianity, his wild denunciations of them as the invention

of priests and tyrants, would be entirely repugnant to the philosophical agnosticism of to-day, which looks upon Christianity as one of the great factors in the history of human progress. He was woefully deficient in judgment. He was unable to think rightly of his fellow-beings, and especially of women. In his relations with the latter he rapidly passed from enchantment to disillusion, and erred as grievously in the one stage as in the other. Harriet Westbrook changed from "a divine little scion of infidelity" into "a frantic idiot;" Elizabeth Hitchener from "a sister of his soul" into "a brown demon;" Emilia Viviani from "a Juno" into "a centaur." And in spite of the incorruptible sincerity which made him utter his convictions at the cost of whatever worldly advantage, he was untruthful and unreliable in regard to the facts of his own life.

Dr. Dowden notices the latter frailty of Shelley's, and makes an ingenious apology for it. We must bear in mind, he says, that the poet, "who had only a faint interest in the history of nations, was one of those men for whom the hard outline of facts in their own individual history has little fixity; whose footsteps are forever followed and overflowed by the wave of oblivion; who remember with extraordinary

tenacity the sentiment of times and of places, but lose the framework of circumstance in which the sentiment was set; and who, in reconstructing an image of the past, often unconsciously supply links and lines upon the suggestion of that sentiment or emotion which is for them the essential reality. There are not a few persons who from their own experience can vouch for the existence of such transforming powers of recollection; their lives have been for them a train of emotions and ideas rather than of events, and in recalling foregone events an involuntary artistic instinct is at work, unconsciously adapting circumstance to feelings by aid of a winnowing wind of desire astir amid the mobile cloud-land of the past."

This is very pretty. But it is just as well to look facts in the face. There are words which characterize fairly well the frame of mind that Dr. Dowden describes. "Untruthful" is one of them. The idea that the frailties of genius are sacred is one of the common errors which result from our mistaken notions of genius. Goethe tells us that Nature reveals her secrets in her monsters. Now, geniuses are among her monsters. If we are to draw any useful sociological lessons from the study of their characteristics, we must beware of



making excuses which we would not make in the case of lesser men. The self-love which makes people desire to view themselves in a picturesque light is at the bottom of much of the untruthfulness in the world. It vitiates the so-called "Confessions" of many famous men. And not only in the letter to Godwin which forms the text for Mr. Dowden's apology, but also on other occasions, Shelley was a victim to this vice. His best friends often refused to accept his statements of facts. There seems to be little room for doubt that the bigoted officer in the Italian post-office who felled him to the ground because he confessed to being "that damned atheist Shelley" was a figment of his own brain. And the celebrated nocturnal encounter at Tanyrallt with a would-be assassin, which has been a sad puzzle to all biographers who accept Shelley's statements, is explainable only on the theory that Shelley was deliberately fraudulent and pierced his night-gown with the ball from his own pistol, in order, like Pooh-Bah, to add "artistic verisimilitude to a bald and unconvincing narrative."



## ON TRUTH-TELLING IN BIOGRAPHY.

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WHEN the reflections made in our last chapter appeared in a periodical, a correspondent who described himself as an old reader hitherto content to act the passive part, accepting thankfully the good things set before him, was moved to avail himself of "the privilege sometimes accorded to the laity of having a voice in the matter." He began by reminding the Philistine of the old Scotch proverb that it is an ill bird which fouls its own nest, and he continued, "The inodorous truth of this saying is often called to my mind by the persistent efforts of certain writers to present literary men, especially those who have passed away, in their worst light,—to bring out phases of their nature showing them mean and silly, weak and wicked. These writers appear to have discovered that they have a high moral duty to perform: they become very tender in conscience about the estimate the world has been putting on obscure individuals connected with men of genius; chivalrous in bringing them before the public for tardy justice. All of which, by the way, is

asked for by no one, and would be the last thing desired by these unfortunates could they speak for themselves. Has the author's life been so much of a success that he need be made to know his place and taught humility? Which has done mankind most harm in the past, hero-worship or the opposite tendency? How are the youthful and enthusiastic to be helped by seeing those in whose excellence they found exalted standards lowered in their eyes and by having their enthusiasm cooled? Youth cannot separate the artist from his art, and it is well it cannot. Has the world at large, or rather has the lower walk of the newspaper press, from which it gets so much of its information, been slow to find out the sins of writers and make the most of them? These singers of songs and tellers of stories have done more than all others to lessen the sadness of the soul in these days when science and philosophy appear only to widen and deepen the problems of life, without offering for them solutions or increasing our hope of ultimate enlightenment. Pessimism is not popular, but I will venture to submit whether this is not an age of high moral standards and small performance. In view of this, let us leave the men of the past to the measure that was meted out to them by their contemporaries."

When those redoubtable disputants, Tom Touchy and Will Wimble, appealed to Sir Roger de Coverley to settle a controversy between them, the good knight listened with patience, "and, having paused some time, told them, with the air of a man who would not give his judgment rashly, that much might be said on both sides." The Philistine confesses that this temper of mind is one which he finds very congenial. It is pleasant to dally with both sides of a question,—to keep your mental eyes open to the magnificent vista of arguments that Alp-like rise one above the other on either side, until on either side they melt away into the immeasurable distance, far, far beyond the range of human vision. "To speak," says Goethe, "is to begin to err." For we can hardly speak, we can hardly even think, without limiting ourselves, without becoming partisans, without ranging ourselves on one side or the other of a mooted question, without closing our ears to the music which to our opponent's sense gives harmony to his arguments. And, dear God! it is so easy for us to go wrong. Even in the eases where we are right, we probably reach the right by wrong reasoning. The watch that has stopped is right twice in the twenty-four hours. Only very young people are infallible. To be sure, there is the Pope; but even he claims to

be infallible within the narrowest limitations, and only a small fraction of the world is willing to yield him credence. For the rest, what test of right thinking is there? Our reason? The chief use of our reason is to teach us on the morrow how false were our conclusions of the day before. The consensus of mankind? On no one subject has mankind reached a consensus. The judgment of the best minds, of Matthew Arnold's remnant? How shall we know which are the best minds, or, having found them, shall we find them in agreement? The wisest man errs almost as often and as grievously as the fool. We have authority for calling Solomon a wise man, yet he made at least six hundred and ninety-nine mistakes. If we wish to refrain from error, we must cease from thinking and cease from speaking, or at least we must cease from coming to any decision on any question that has the normal number of sides.

Still, if the Philistine were pressed for a yea or a nay, he would side against his correspondent. He would acknowledge the force of that gentleman's arguments, he would be humbly alive to his own fallibility, but he would suggest, not insist, that the truth is usually better than a lie. If the idols which "the youthful and the enthusiastic" have set up are

clay, it is best to point out the truth, though it might then be in order to prove that the clay was at least of a superior character. "Paint me with all my wrinkles," said Cromwell to the artist who was inclined to flatter him, knowing well that the harshness of that princely countenance was nobler than the sleek beauty of the curled darling. Illusion may be helpful to the youthful and the enthusiastic; but disillusion is fatal, and there is no disillusion so terrible as that which springs from the recognition that much of history and biography and fiction is a lie,—as unfortunately it is. To quote again from the ever-quotable Goethe, the difference between men and women is that women deceive each other but do not deceive men, while men do not deceive each other but do deceive women. And women are glad to be deceived wherever truth would be painful to them. Tell any woman exactly what you believe and what you know about her husband, excellent but imperfect man as he may be, she would turn you out of her house in angry scorn. The whole atmosphere of modern literature, and especially of modern fiction, is womanly; the conventions are womanly,—they are part of the general deception of women which is practised by men. But perhaps if the novelist were more truthful, if he painted life as it is, if he gave us flesh-

and-blood heroes, with all the weakness and the error to which flesh and blood is liable and the self-conquest of which it is capable, more men might be willing to read the modern novel and might find strength and comfort and guidance in it. History and biography are, of course, less conventionalized than fiction, for they deal with real men, whose sins and struggles and sufferings have left an ineffaceable record ; but it is precisely here, where real men are concerned, and not imaginary puppets to whom all sorts of impossible qualities may freely be attributed,—it is precisely here that the lie does most harm, in the reaction which the young and the enthusiastic are sure to experience when they at length discover the inevitable truth.

There is another value in truthfulness where the biography of any artistic worker is concerned, that it aids us in the establishment of truer and juster canons of criticism. A work of art, in the last analysis, is the expression of just so much heart and brain as the artist was possessed of. If the man is genuine and sincere his work will be genuine and sincere ; if he is a sham his work will be a sham. It is a good thing to have some means of positively identifying the true from the false. Take the

case of Thackeray, Dickens, and Bulwer. In their own day each had his respective circle of worshippers, which insisted on the manifest superiority of its own idol. *De gustibus non est disputandum* is a truism which acquires a certain dignity when clothed in a dead language. Nevertheless even matters of taste can be justified or discredited by biographical facts. Every new light that has been thrown on Thackeray's character has increased his reputation. We have learned to know the man as he was. We have learned to read the man in his works. The criticism which described him as a soured, disappointed, and vulgar cynic has had its day. The *a priori* judgment of those who looked upon him as earnest, noble, loving, and lovable, as a Mr. Greatheart fighting against error with infinite charity for the wrong-doer, with humble consciousness of his own weakness, has been ratified by facts. On the other hand, Dickens and, in a far greater degree, Bulwer have been sinking in popular estimation. The criticism which, while recognizing the splendid genius of Dickens, deplored his tendency to clap-trap and melodrama, his offences against good taste, his egotism, and his womanish unreasonableness, has been confirmed by the revelation that all these weaknesses were integral parts of his personal character. Bulwer



is the most striking example of the three. To many of us who are unable to throw ourselves back into a former generation, to look at the world through the eyes of our fathers or grandfathers, it is simply incredible that an author whose books are full of so much sham philosophy, sham poetry, sham emotion, sham humor, sham eloquence, should have been accepted seriously by any sane man. "Bulwer nauseates me," says Hawthorne, who was himself too genuine to tolerate sham: "he is the very pimple of the age's humbug. There is no hope of the public so long as he finds a reader, an admirer, or a publisher." A few years ago Bulwer's biography was written by his son: the darker shades of his character were omitted, and he was presented to the world with the conventional simper which adorns heroes of the average biography. But the executor and friend of the novelist's wife was determined that the true story of that lady's life should be given to the public. She published the actual correspondence that had passed between Sir Edward and Lady Bulwer. Sir Edward, by his own showing, was made to appear in so unworthy a light that his son promptly appealed to the law to suppress the book. More recently the same friend, Louisa Devey, prepared a "Life of Lady Bulwer," which is based upon



this correspondence, upon the writings of Lady Bulwer, and upon the accounts which she herself gave to the biographer.

It is not necessary to accept everything in Louisa Devey's book as the truth. Lady Bulwer was no angel. She was violent in temper, narrow in mind, bitter in her prejudices. The novels which she published, in which she attacked not only her husband but all his circle of friends,—Dickens, Disraeli, Thackeray, Palmerston, etc.,—simply overshot the mark by their violence. They are vulgar, foolish, execrable in taste, weak in grammar, weak in syntax, strong only in vituperation. The public read the books, laughed at them, and speedily forgot them. They were excusable in looking upon them as the merest vagaries of insanity. But this only made the pathos of the poor lady's position more poignant. After all possible allowances, there is no doubt that she was cruelly, even barbarously, wronged by her husband. He was unfaithful to her, lied to her, deceived her; he made her life wretched by his arrogant and overbearing temper; once at least he kicked her, and once he bit her savagely in the cheek. After the separation he dogged her footsteps with spies, in the hope of convicting her of some divorceable offence. In Paris a disgrace-

ful public scandal was occasioned by the arrest and trial of some of his emissaries caught in the act of purloining her private papers. It may be that the young and the enthusiastic, if in these days any such still worship Bulwer, will be disillusioned by this bare statement of facts; but isn't it just as well that the truth should be known, that the sham should be unveiled?



## THE MISTAKES OF THE JUDICIOUS.

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ARISTOTLE says that the determination of what a thing is, is *ὡς ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὀρίσεται*, "as the judicious would determine." Matthew Arnold calls this admirable common sense; and in truth it is good that the world is inclined to follow the lead of those whom it looks upon as the judicious, for the judicious are right in fifty-one cases out of a hundred, while the fool is right only in forty-nine. It is in the recognition of that one possible case above the average that all human progress lies, and in order to effect this recognition nature forces men into fashions and conventions of thought, so that gradually, slowly but surely, the fool shall run his thoughts into the same mould as that of the judicious, and shall finally learn wherein they are right. But, as the judicious go wrong in forty-nine cases out of the hundred, it is good also that these conventions should be sufficiently plastic to alter from generation to generation, so that the errors of the judicious, the right thinking of fools, may also come in due time to be recognized as part and parcel of the

world's stock of knowledge. The folly of one generation is often the wisdom of the next.

When Charles Perrault's collection of fairy-tales made their first appearance they were read with avidity by the general public, which is known to be frivolous and light-minded. Occasionally a man of intellect devoted his leisure moments to their perusal, but it was with a certain air of condescension, of unbending. "I borrowed one or two idle books of *Contes des Fées*," Swift confesses rather shamefacedly in his *Journal to Stella*, "and have been reading them these two days, although I have much business upon my hands." If Swift's ghost ever revisits the earth in these days it must be greatly surprised to see idle books of a similar character in the hands of the wisest thinkers and most profound scholars of the day, and still more to learn that these men devote a lifetime of study to the elucidation of the tales they contain, and to speculations upon their origin and diffusion,—speculations which are expected to establish the most important sociological truths, to solve linguistic problems, to reconstruct the story of man in what are now known as the prehistoric stages of his existence, and even—in the opinion of many sanguine souls—to overturn or make us reconsider much

that is now accepted as fundamental religious truth.

In the Middle Ages the judicious occupied their minds with the acknowledged classics of literature, and with the most ingenious scholastic disputations in regard to the future destiny of man. To the custody of clowns and fools they left all those charming fictions and superstitions which, descending from a remote antiquity, contained within them the most reliable records as to the past history of man ; and upon the very ignorance of the lower orders depended the traditional transmission of these myths in something like their pristine purity. The great romantic revival of the eighteenth century, which instilled a new life into literature, was simply an acknowledgment on the part of the judicious of the merit of these traditions from the purely artistic point of view, just as the recent kindling of philosophical interest in comparative folklore has been an acknowledgment of their scientific value.

The judicious have always grieved over the corruption of language, over the slang phrases and the grammatical misconceptions that defile its purity and outrage its subtler beauty. And from their point of view they are right ;

for if rules of grammar and principles of order were not universally respected wherever they are apprehended, there would be no such thing as language at all. Yet it is precisely through the misapprehensions of fools and clowns, through ignorance and stupidity, that the most sonorous and magnificent of modern languages have had their origin, and it is through similar misapprehensions, ignorance, and stupidity that they are continually growing in volume and in riches. The most valuable and significant additions that are made to our vocabularies are coined in the gutters, and not in the laboratories or the libraries of the judicious.

Charles Mackay complains in his Autobiography that the songs he has thrown off in the heat of the moment, "There's a Good Time Coming, Boys," "Cleon hath a Thousand Acres," etc., have obtained wide popularity, while the serious and earnest work of his lifetime has received the approval only of a few choice minds,—of the judicious, in short. Here, again, the judicious are wrong, the masses are right. The only permanent additions to English literature which Dr. Mackay has made are the very songs which he despises. Mr. Palgrave says, in his preface to "The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics," "The editor

trusts he may add without egotism that he has found the vague general verdict of popular fame more just than those have thought who, with too severe a criticism, would confine judgments on poetry to the selected few of many generations." That treasure-trove to Shakespearean scholars, the recently-discovered "Return from Parnassus," has pretty well established the fact that Shakespeare in his own day was the delight of the groundlings and the scorn of the judicious. Macaulay has shown us how the tinker Bunyan was for generations despised by the learned and cherished only by the unlearned. Many of the greatest poets—Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Walt Whitman (the list might be almost indefinitely extended)—have found the majority of the judicious arrayed against them. In our country to-day, some of the most vital and vigorous verses are written by poets to whom the judicious are inclined to deny even the name of poet, yet whom the public has taken to its heart,—Will Carleton and James Whitcomb Riley.

There is no question upon which the judicious are so thoroughly agreed as that the interest which the general public feel in the private lives of great men is vulgar, wrong, and disgraceful. That people who, perhaps, have

never read a line of an author's works should stand agape to discover whether he parted his hair at the side or in the middle, whether he maltreated his wife, whether he got intoxicated, seems to be the height of folly. Tennyson's famous lines spring to the mind at once :

For now the Poet cannot die  
Nor leave his music as of old,  
But round him ere he searce be cold  
Begins the scandal and the cry :

"Proclaim the faults he would not show :  
Break lock and seal : betray the trust :  
Keep nothing sacred : 'tis but just  
The many-headed beast should know."

Ah, shameless ! for he did but sing  
A song that pleased us from its worth ;  
No public life was his on earth,  
No blazoned statesman he, nor king.

He gave the people of his best ;  
His worst he kept, his best he gave.  
My Shakespeare's curse on clown and knave  
Who will not let his ashes rest !

A splendid piece of invective, truly, hot with the awful wrath of the just man. Yet what, after all, if the clown and knave be right ? What if the interests of the race are subserved by this vulgar curiosity, even if it be at the



expense of the individual great man? If so, the interests of the race are paramount. "For," to quote Tennyson against himself,—

"The individual withers, but the race is more and more."

In a former chapter we have agreed (writers always have the pleasant privilege of assuming that their readers agree with them) that Goethe was wise in asserting that Nature reveals her secrets in her monsters, or, as the *mot* might be paraphrased, she proves her rules by her exceptions. It is of the greatest importance to the race that those rules should be established. The proper study of mankind is man. Now, geniuses are the exceptions which prove the rule. The abstract fact that a man beats his wife is of no value; but taken in connection with the further fact that the same man can write beautifully about the domestic affections in the intervals of wife-beating, it at once suggests a problem worthy the consideration of the profoundest sociologists. Were it not for the public avidity to hear these details, the public willingness to buy the books that supply them, there would be little chance of their ever becoming known. As the Müllers and Karl Blinds of the present spend laborious yet fruitful days over the nursery-tales which seemed too trivial and childish for even the leisure

moments of our grandfathers, so we may foresee the Herbert Spencers and Virchows of the future making exhaustive studies in the literature of scandal and gossip which offends the taste of the judicious among our contemporaries.



## THE MISTAKES OF THE CRITICS.

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AN accurate history of criticism would be a delightful burlesque upon the fallibility of the judicious: only the historian should owe no fealty to what is current, he should stand so far apart from present human thought that all its most cherished conclusions should appear to him shifting waves in an ocean of folly,—should recognize that our moralities may be vices, our vices virtues, our orthodoxies follies, our rascals heroes, our masterpieces daubs, our Shakespeares and Goethes and Virgils and Dantes the puerile intelligences that their contemporaries mostly believed them to be.

The critics have always been against any new force in life or literature. For the critical is essentially the conservative, the Tory element in human nature,—the respecter of orthodoxies and conventions. The critical mind must have some fixed standard, some inflexible rule, by which to judge. It must love the right. It must hate the wrong. But Nature has no fixed standard, no inflexible rule, no right, no wrong:

Known yet ignored, nor divined, nor unguessed,  
Such is Man's law of life. Do we strive to declare  
What is ill, what is good in our spinning? Worst, best,  
Change hues of a sudden; now here and now there  
Flits the sign which decides; all about yet nowhere.

So sing Browning's Fates, and Joaquin Miller  
has put a similar thought in these words:

In men whom men denounce as ill  
I see so much of goodness still;  
In men whom men pronounce divine  
I see so much of sin and blot;  
I hesitate to draw a line  
Between the two—where God has not.

Now, if the critic were not wiser than God he would cease to exist. He *must* draw lines, he *must* apply to present performances the tests which represent the accumulated experiences of the past. He *must* praise, he *must* blame. And because he does these things he justifies his existence. The Whig welcomes Christ, the Tory retains him. Towards the Whigs of the past the Tory can do something like justice, for it is he who profits most by the lessons of the past. The Whig has his eye on the future, he is a little too impatient of the past; in last year's harvest he would sacrifice tares and wheat alike. To contemporary orthodoxies, though they owe their inception to Whigs of former days, he is apt to be unjust, for he is

busy with heterodoxies which shall become the orthodoxies of the future.

Grammar, rhetoric, logic, rhythm, dogma,—all these mirages of the Infinite are the proper elements for the Tory; the Whig is absorbed in the effort to grasp the Infinite itself. The Tory is Wagner, the Whig Faust. In the former the intellect predominates, in the latter the soul,—at once the highest and the lowest in man, the First and the Last. Instinct was born before Reason, and still outruns the later, and in one sense the higher, development. The intellect has built up all social systems, all conventions, proprieties, and orthodoxies, in the effort to realize the dreams of the soul, but the soul recognizes their futility, sees that they are shadow, not substance, mirage, not reality, and is constantly engaged in reaching out for a higher ideal.

In the presence of men of exquisite literary instincts, men like Howells and James and Daudet, in whom the intellect dominates the soul, whose genius runs in the old grooves sanctioned by canon and convention, the critic is rarely at a loss. He has a rule and measure by which he can test them and determine their value. He is always the first to welcome them :

his judgment is ahead of the public judgment. But in the presence of the great original force that transcends rule and custom, that rejects the past and prophesies the future, the critic is for the time being utterly at a loss. Only two such forces have appeared in America,—Walt Whitman and Emerson. Both fared badly with the critic in their earlier days, both reached the unliterary or at least the uncritical public before they won over the lettered minority. The *New York Nation* is justly looked upon as one of our highest critical authorities. As clever an article as it ever printed was a slashing review of Whitman's "*Leaves of Grass*" some time after the appearance of that epoch-making volume. It said some things that were true, many that were witty. The true things and the witty things are alike forgotten; "*Leaves of Grass*" is recognized as a monumental addition to American literature. Emerson's "*Brahma*," the most significant short poem ever written in this country, was laughed at from the Atlantic to the Pacific; the funny men of the press found it an inexhaustible subject for satire, parody, burlesque; the critics joined in the laugh; by advice of his publishers Emerson omitted it from the first collection of his poems. Satires, parodies, burlesques, and criticisms have alike disappeared and left not a wrack behind,—

and not only no collection of Emerson's poems, but no general compendium of English poetry, is complete without "Brahma."

In England one might make a choice collection of similar mistaken criticisms. The *Athenæum* has always been an authority in literary matters, but the *Athenæum* thought Carlyle was a madman, discoursing nonsense, and the *Athenæum* voiced almost the unanimous critical opinion of the period. For many years the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review* were the acknowledged guides of public opinion in literary matters. The *Edinburgh Review* advised Byron to quit versifying, told Wordsworth he would never do, thought Goethe was a writer whom no gentleman could tolerate, and deemed Ruskin a fool. The *Quarterly Review* characterized Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound" as "drivelling prose run mad," and his "Revolt of Islam" as "insupportably dull;" looked upon Keats's "Endymion" as "gratuitous nonsense;" said of Dickens, "he has risen like a rocket, and he will come down like a stick;" sneered with clumsy irony at "the peculiar brilliancy" of "the gems that irradiate the poetical crown" of that "singular genius" Mr. Alfred Tennyson; and thought that if that wicked book "Jane Eyre" were written by a

woman, it must be by "one who for some sufficient reason has forfeited the society of her sex."

The critics have always flattered one of the absurdest conventions of literary men,—the tendency to look upon themselves as personally aggrieved if the public fails to buy their books, and to lay the blame upon those authors who, in a favorite phrase, "pander to the popular taste." Abstractly considered, of course, it would be only fair that the writer who has devoted a lifetime to the completion of a great historical or philosophical work, the poet or the sage who has sown the seed in one generation that is to revolutionize society in the next, should receive a larger pecuniary reward than one who has only produced a pleasant little story. But, abstractly considered, the laboring man who provides us with necessities, the real wealth of the world, deserves a higher recompense than the one who ministers merely to our pleasures. The work performed by the farmer and the mechanic is indispensable to our existence, the opera-singer merely charms an idle hour. Yet the farmer and the mechanic earn a dollar or two for ten hours of drudgery. Patti receives five thousand dollars a night. The inexorable law of supply and demand



cannot be argued out of existence by appeals to sentimental justice. There are thousands of men able to perform the work of the laborer, there is only one Patti. Patti demands her own terms, the laborer accepts the market value of his services which is the final result of mutual underbidding. The same law of supply and demand applies, in another way, to the literary market. The remuneration which an author receives depends upon the popular demand for such work as he can produce. If Jones's last novel sells a hundred thousand copies, that merely means that there are just a hundred thousand people who value the pleasure and profit they derive from the book more than they do the dollar with which they purchase it. Why shouldn't they be allowed to spend their dollar as they choose? And why should not the popular author receive his ten per centum or whatever larger proportion of that dollar his generous publisher may decide to be his due? If, on the other hand, Smith sells only a thousand copies of his great philosophical work, that is simply because there is only a limited audience who can enjoy or profit by his labors. It may be deplorable that such is the case, but it is idle for Smith to rail against the world, and it is idle also for him to rail against Jones. The great mind of Smith may not be able to

deseend to the level of Jones's novel, but he should remember that there are poor creatures in this world to whom that level is an ascent. In so far as Jones in his humble way assists in elevating his fellow-men, he is a public benefactor.

It is the fashion to talk about the baneful effects of reading trash. But trash is a merely relative word. What is trash to one man is not trash to another. Shakespeare's poetry would be trash to an angel. People who fancy themselves geniuses are rather fond of differentiating mankind into geniuses and dunces. After all, there is no such great difference between a genius and a dunce: only our microscopical vision, accustomed to take note of the infinitesimal, is able to detect it. Was it not Thackeray who defined the difference between Shakespeare and an ordinary mind as the difference in length between two maggots? The average height of a man is five feet eight inches. If he rises a foot above that we call him a giant, if he falls a foot we call him a dwarf. Twelve inches is a great matter to us, what matter is it in infinite space? In the intellectual world a man looks for assistance to one just a little higher than himself. Therefore, what is trash to you and me may not be trash to our neighbor who is less splendidly endowed. It is im-

possible to put ourselves in another's place and understand the pleasure and nutriment he may draw from what is poison to us. The poor laborer may enjoy his crust of bread more than a pampered monarch does the richest viands. Yet we pity the laborer and envy the monarch.

Is an educated taste, indeed, a curse or a blessing? Which is most to be envied,—the epicure over his terrapin and Amontillado, or the boy in the rapture of his first *bonbon*? As we grow older we learn to distinguish more certainly and more precisely the shades of difference between great writers and poor, to apprehend the deeper meaning of sage and poet; we grow wiser,—perhaps (for even this may be doubted),—but are we any the happier for it? *Le plaisir du critique ôte le plaisir d'entendre les belles choses*, says Fénelon. We call this or that great genius a magician, we speak of the enchanted wand by which he waves us into faëry-land. Ah, well! there is a real faëry-land, and we have all known it (for we too were born in Arcadia), where life is strange and new and full of delirious transport, where all the earth shouts for joy, where the morning stars, singing together, are not so sweet as the voices of the men and women whom we know, where every youth to every maid, and every maid to every

youth, is that divine possibility which in some one of them shall soon be realized,—that object towards whom all tumultuous passions shall trend, in whom love and awe and reverence shall find an abiding-place, so that all fleshly cerements shall fade away, and Soul stand naked before naked Soul, glorious and unabashed, and the Infinite be revealed. What ho! without there, Seneschal, a stoup of wine, —for thy Philistine master is old and wan and his heart is chill, and only the generous vintage of Oporto and Bordeaux may warm him to some dim remembrance of the splendors of his prime,—when, reeling with his passions and his imaginations, he first came upon the theatre of action. But all around him and about him there are still beings such as erstwhile *he* was, —living in that faëry-land which is now only a remembrance and a regret, youths in the first flush of that glorious intoxication, who reckon not of the choice bouquet of the precious wines, who know not Bordeaux nor Port, to whose virgin palates the meanest *vin ordinaire* is as some divinest nectar.

Does the reader see the parable? Does he recognize that the Philistine is comparing the great writers to Bordeaux and Port, which only the educated palate can fully appreciate, and the

lesser writers to *vin ordinaire*, which the educated would reject, yet which titillates all the nerves and glands of the uneducated with a joy that the former would give Golconda to reconquer? The young reader has a real intellectual advantage over his elders. He cares little for the subtler beauties of style, for great thoughts, for vivid insight, for any novelty in incident or situation, for any real approach of mind to mind. Enough if hero and heroine dance and flirt, love, quarrel, kiss, and make it up, if there be laughter and tears, sunshine and moonlight, open compliment and whispered adulation, the sheen of pretty dresses and of golden hair, the ring and the ripple of small-talk,—with a due allowance of incidents, accidents, and startling transitions. The alert imagination of youth catches fire at a word. Reader and novelist meet each other half-way: the novelist provides plot and characters, the reader dowers them with life and likelihood.

Not in the printed page, but in the eye that reads, lies the real well-spring of pleasure in books:

All rests with those who read. A work or thought  
Is what each makes it to himself, and may  
Be full of great dark meanings, like the sea,  
With shoals of life rushing; or like the air,

Benighted with the wing of the wild dove,  
Sweeping miles broad o'er the far western woods,  
With mighty glimpses of the central light;  
Or may be nothing—bodiless, spiritless.

After all, to be a popular author, to write books that go to the heart of the masses, even though they gain their popularity by appealing to an ephemeral taste, is not an achievement to be despised. Success in literature requires rarer abilities than success in any other department of human exertion, as the field of competition is immeasurably wider. A lawyer or a doctor, at the outset of his career, at least, is brought into competition with local talent only. If he prove himself the equal or the superior of Jones and Smith, who may be his next-door neighbors, he plants his foot securely on a comfortable rung of the ladder. But an author from the start has to compete not only with all the professionals of his own country and of other countries which speak the same language, or who are susceptible of translation, but also with the amateurs who occasionally dabble in literature, and not only with the men of the present but in a measure those of the past as well. He is judged by the standards applied to the great masters of all times and countries, and if he fails in the test the critics and more thoughtful readers speak contemptuously of his work as

trash. Yet even the failure in literature may be cleverer than his readers or his critics, and the same amount of ability put into some calling with a more restricted field of action might win him a distinguished position in his own locality. And *a fortiori* the successful author, no matter how ephemeral his success, is as one man picked out of many thousands. A sliding scale of merit should be recognized in literature.

The author who fails to satisfy the higher intelligence of his age may yet be a purveyor not only of agreeable entertainment to thousands of his fellows, but of instruction also. The progress of civilization is a slow and gradual evolution. At certain stages of development men may be helped immensely by books that may be worse than useless to those who are but one remove above them. A man derives pleasure from a book because it brings him in contact with a higher intelligence, a nimbler wit, a riper judgment, than his own. There may be no point of contact between him and the great masters. In that case the latter can have no salutary influence over him. The books that he does relish may in time educate him to the level of appreciating higher things. The Philistine, for his part, remembers with gratitude a great many works which assisted him in his



callow youth and would be *caviare* to his maturer judgment.

There are men of education, culture, and intelligence—men like Lessing, Johnson, Coleridge,—even the myriad-minded Goethe himself—to whom music makes no appeal. They might enter an opera- or a concert-house, and, while the waves of harmony fused an average audience into one vast unison of delight, they would remain unmoved, some of them even scornfully quiescent. “Music is the least unpleasant of noises,” was Ursa Major’s disdainful definition. Paintings and sculpture wearied Scott and Byron; Hawthorne and Howells have confessed their inability to appreciate the acknowledged masterpieces of Italian art. The world, in its present temper, would condemn their opinions as wrong and persist in the orthodox admirations. But when you sink below the level of the average audience, the critic who indiscriminately damns the things which appeal to the partially washed and the wholly uneducated is upheld by the cultivated world. A man of education who goes into a Bowery theatre and finds an audience moved to laughter or to tears over some cheap melodrama, or who reads the *New York Ledger* and similar sheets, is applauded for refusing to see anything in



drama or novel, and for thinking contemptuously of the audience to whom they appeal. Yet no mere average intelligence or ordinary education could produce a work that goes straight to the hearts of a crowd or a mob. There must be some insight into human nature, some sympathetic magnetism, some real vitalizing power, in a man who can focus the emotions of a thousand souls. And if the cultivated by-stander fails to see where that power resides, there must be something wanting in his mental furnishment, as there was something wanting in the mental furnishment of the great men whom we have named.

These popular melodramas, these popular novels, are not only not immoral, they are unexceptionably moral, else they would fail to reach the corporate conscience. The corporate conscience is a curious thing. Go to the lowest theatre in any of our large cities, or, if your sex or respectability forbids this, mark what is called the "Family Circle" by theatre proprietors and to the general world is more felicitously known as the "Peanut Gallery." There may be excellent people here,—the heroic boot-black, the poor but proud newsboy,—there is also sure to be a fair allowance of thieves, knaves, adulterers, and other criminals, whose like we well

know are not to be found in the exalted circles where you and I number our friends. Well, the thieves, the knaves, the adulterers, have no sympathy for thievery, knavery, adultery, when unfolded before them on the stage. They are madly delighted when crime is punished, when virtue is rewarded, when the thief is arrested, the knave exposed, the seducer foiled,—when the noble and suffering hero is at last joined to the noble and suffering heroine. The great heart of humanity is sound and true, though there may be skin-diseases on the surface. Men are better than they seem ; and somehow the cheap novelist, the cheap dramatist, seem to have the power of reaching the better self, of developing the better instincts.



## THE MISTAKES OF THE NOVELISTS.

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LORD CAMPBELL—was it not?—once wrote a book to prove that Shakespeare, from the internal evidence of his dramas, must have been an accomplished lawyer. The book is naturally highly prized by the advocates of the Baconian theory. It is true the anti-Baconians hold that Bacon never could have written the dramas, because they are full of legal mistakes which might call a blush to the cheek of even an attorney's clerk. But this only emphasizes the great truth that if Bacon did not write the dramas he ought to have done so, just as he ought to have survived to write the modern novels. Only a man who has taken all knowledge to be his province could be fully equipped as a dramatist in Shakespeare's time or a novelist in ours. Science, philosophy, theology, medicine, law, should be at the fingers' ends of writers whose plots are continually bringing them face to face with the minutiae of those sciences. It cannot please the author of the last new novel to learn that his pet clergyman has betrayed signal ignorance of the religion he professes, that his judge has

made rulings contrary to all law, that his heroine never could have died of the disease with which he has afflicted her, but is still existing somewhere in cloud-land as an interesting valetudinarian.

Even Walter Scott, who was usually careful of his accessories, makes the Fair Maid of Perth go to mass in the afternoon, whereas that service can only be performed in the morning. It has been urged against Wilkie Collins, who is fond of introducing the sick-room into his novels, that he does not always succeed in correctly diagnosing his patient's case, in spite of the fact that his proof-sheets, so the gossip runs, are submitted to professional criticism. But it is in law that the novelist's feet have strayed the furthest, for law has a natural fascination to the romancer in its close connection with crime, mystery, and tragedy, while it is a slippery subject even in the hands of an expert. Some of the famous trial scenes that live vividly in the memory of the old novel-reader—the trial scenes, for example, in "Very Hard Cash," in "Griffith Gannet," and in "Orley Farm"—show all the layman's unfamiliarity with the laws of evidence, and to the legal mind have about equal verisimilitude with the still more famous trial scene in "The Merchant of Venice." The

greatest blunderers, of course, are the lady novelists,—Miss Braddon, Mrs. Henry Wood, and our own dear Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth. In her “Missing Bride” the latter has given us a trial scene where the jury are drawn not by the sheriff, but by “idle curiosity.” They “arrive unprejudiced,” however, in which frame of mind they offer a noble contrast to the judge, whose shameful partiality is painted in glaring colors. That laymen and laywomen should blunder is natural enough, however; it is natural enough even when the laymen, Charles Reade and Anthony Trollope, for example, had eaten dinners at Lincoln’s Inn. But that Samuel Warren, a trained lawyer, a lawyer in active practice, a Q. C., should make an error in the very turning-point of a novel written with the utmost care and elaborated with great effect, is really remarkable. Yet this is only the fact. In “Ten Thousand a Year,” when the crisis of interest has been reached in the trial scene, a deed which would have decided the case is set aside by the judge because an erasure is discovered in a material point. The clerk who had engrossed the deed had made the erasure through carelessness. It is true that Blackstone lays the rule down without qualification that an erasure vitiates a deed. But the weight of authority, from Coke down to Greenleaf, has

decided that the jury must determine whether the erasure was made before or after signing, and unless they find it was made after signing the deed will stand.

Here is Tolstoi's "Ivan Ilyitch." Ivan Ilyitch is the story of a sick-room. Is the pathology all right? one cannot help asking. Whatever the doctors may say, the preachers at least can have no fault to find with the story, except that it usurps their function. It is one of the most forcible sermons ever penned,—as forcible as that ghastly and terrible chapter in which Carlyle has pictured Louis XV. on his death-bed. The incidents are of the simplest. Ivan Ilyitch is a Russian official. An average man mentally and morally, who takes the world as he finds it, who aims only to live comfortably and respectably in the eyes of his neighbors, who is absorbed in the minutiae of daily life and in vulgar thoughts and ambitions, he has no leisure to cultivate the higher emotions or the kindly affections. At the period of his greatest worldly success he injures himself by a fall while arranging his new residence in obedience to the whims of his querulous wife and his own aspirations for elegance. It is nothing, apparently,—only a slight bruise, which passes off in a day or two. But for some weeks Ivan complains of

a strange taste in his mouth and an uneasiness in the left side of his abdomen. The uneasiness increases. Ivan consults the doctors. First one celebrity gives his opinion, then another. Ivan only learns that he is in a bad way. He is exasperated at the cold-blooded scientific manner in which the doctors dwell upon the symptoms that strike him with anguish and terror. He is exasperated still more by the coldness and indifference of his wife and daughter. The former even seems to look upon his illness as an added indignity put upon herself. He grows worse and takes to his bed. The doctors cheerily consult and disagree; the family continue their wonted occupations and amusements; on the poor stricken wretch, face to face with the awful horror of death, the lesson of the vanity and emptiness of life—above all, the vanity and emptiness of the life which he has been leading—presses with hideous force. He hates his wife, he hates his daughter, he hates himself; he dies at last in mental and bodily torture. The widow assumes becoming mourning, weeps in public, and in private inquires about the insurance policy; mass is celebrated over the remains; a number of friends gather at the funeral. That is the whole story. No words can do justice to its ghastly impressiveness.



Not in a spirit of hypercriticism, but as curious matter for speculation, it might not be amiss to ask whether Ivan Ilyitch is, after all, a consistent reality? That in conventional critical language he is true to the broad general facts of human nature is undeniable. A man whose career of health and worldly prosperity had been suddenly arrested by sickness and the fear of death might suffer in the way that Ivan Ilyitch does, if he were a man of sensitive moral fibre, no matter what amount of selfishness and indifference to his better impulses his life might have engendered. Tolstoï himself, for example, would have suffered thus if he had been cut down in a similar fashion at any time during the ten years of which he writes "I put men to death in war, I fought duels to slay others, I lost at cards, wasted my substance wrung from the sweat of peasants, punished the latter cruelly, rioted with loose women, and deceived men. Lying, robbery, adultery of all kinds, drunkenness, violence, and murder, all committed by me, not one crime omitted, and yet I was not the less considered by my equals a comparatively moral man." *Mutatis mutandis*, and allowing for some penitential exaggeration, these words would fairly well describe the life of the average young man not only in Russia, but in France or England or America. Tolstoï



says that he cannot now recall those years without a painful feeling of horror and loathing. But he also says that during those years he had been stifling his higher aspirations. The average man who has no higher aspirations to stifle looks back upon such misspent years with neither horror nor loathing. A tough conscience and a good digestion carry a sinner through life pretty comfortably. The digestion may be impaired, but the tough conscience endureth. The Reviewer remembers hearing a clergyman say that the cheerfuller death-beds were those of the sinners rather than of the saints. In one of his poems Byron asserts that death has greater terrors for the pious ascetic than for the sated voluptuary.

Tolstoi has simply, by a supreme effort of imagination, put himself, with his sensitive conscience, his acuter perceptions, in the place of the stricken Ivan. So Dickens has imagined himself in Bill Sykes's place, in Jonas Chuzzlewit's place, and written out the sensations he would have experienced. A brutal animal like Bill Sykes, a narrow-minded sneak like Chuzzlewit, could never feel as the novelist makes them feel. Hawthorne was more successful with Dimmesdale, for Hawthorne *was* Dimmesdale, and he could picture to himself his mental fur-

nishment. The greatest genius is as hopelessly limited within the four walls of his own being as the greatest dunce. "The difficult task of knowing another soul," says George Eliot, "is not for young gentlemen whose consciousness is chiefly made up of their own wishes." Well, that difficult task is not for the great geniuses either. We are all of us hero-worshippers, and inclined to pay divine honors to our idols. The great genius stares with purblind eyes into the infinite, and because he sees a little further than we do we call him a seer, we reverence him as a demi-god. He casts his poor little plummet into the fathomless ocean of human nature, and because he goes deeper than we do we think he has touched bottom. When we say that a writer has great insight into character, we mean that he describes the people around us in a way that seems to us, who know even less than he, true and life-like. When he concerns himself with fictitious characters it is impossible to find him out. When he deals in history he is equally safe, for he makes better use of the materials that are at every one's command. A vivid conception of a man or a period need not be a true one,—indeed, is probably a false one. "Henry Esmond," "Romola," "The French Revolution," merely prove that writers of genius have been able to represent to them-

selves the periods to which these works refer under certain aspects, not that those aspects are true. Paint Savonarola, Marlborough, Danton, in a sufficiently vivid manner, and none will question the likeness. Scott's Louis XI. is, in critical cant, very complete, but that does not prove that it is like the original. It merely proves that Scott had a more vivid imagination than is usually granted to the sons of men. If the writer of insight deals with the characters around him, he is more liable to be tripped up. When Carlyle speaks of "the most popular of men,—inoffensive, like a worn sixpence that has no physiognomy left," he produces an epigram that standing apart from the context is striking and life-like and apparently true. Its untruth is revealed the moment we find that Charles Sumner is the person so described. If Hawthorne had applied his clever and acute description of Margaret Fuller to a fictitious character, no one would have questioned its truth to nature. But when he labelled it Margaret Fuller its injustice became apparent to those who knew that lady better than he did. Dickens in one of his prefaces says, "I have never touched a character precisely from the life, but some counterpart of that character has incredulously asked me, Now, really, did I ever really see one like it?" Probably the inquirer

was right, the novelist wrong. Indeed, the novelist gives himself away, to use the expressive *argot* of the street, in his next sentence. "All the Pecksniff family upon earth" (he continues) "are quite agreed, I believe, that Mr. Pecksniff is an exaggeration, and that no such character ever existed." Well, Mr. Pecksniff never did exist. As a type of hypocrisy and sanctimoniousness he is excellent, as an attempt at the portrayal of individual character he is a monstrous failure.



## THE MISTAKES WE ALL MAKE.

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TOWARDS the close of his long life Richard Baxter, the sternest of Calvinists, and the author of numerous depressing works upon theology, wrote as follows: "I now see more good and more evil in all men than heretofore I did. I see that good men are not so good as I once thought they were, and I find that few are so bad as either malicious enemies or censorious separating professors do imagine." "The longer we live, the more we find we are like other persons," says Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in a recent essay. And George Sand, in her preface to "André," quotes approvingly the Italian proverb, *Tutto il mondo è fatto come la nostra famiglia*. ("All the world is made like our own family.")

These opinions are significant. It is natural for men to believe in Ormuzd and Ahriman, in heroes and villains, in geniuses and dunces, to paint black very black and white very white, to have sharp division between right and wrong, to give intense worship to the things they believe

to be worshipful, and intense hatred to those that are hateful. It is natural also for men to range themselves on the right hand of the Lord, and to surrender the left to those who differ from them in creed, in temperament, in morals, in conventions, in hereditary training, in opinions. Men and races commence by believing themselves the chosen people, their gods the only gods, their prophets the true prophets, their warriors the bravest and most glorious. Outside of the little radius of land that they occupy is *terra incognita*, inhabited only by barbarians and Philistines. Two centuries, a century ago, how strange and narrow were the views that European nations held of their neighbors! John Bull and Johnny Crapaud despised and maligned each other. It was only a short time ago that the French discovered a German could have *esprit*; only a generation or so back that the English learned they could read an American book; only in our time that Europe has been surprised to discover a great Russian literature.

As with nations, so with individuals. Most men—all very young men, certainly—in their inner hearts believe what the Duchesse de la Ferté openly avowed to Madame de Staël: “It is strange, but I find nobody except myself

always in the right." It is natural for us to believe that we have been born into the truth, that we have inherited infallibility, that the feelings we imbibed with our mother's milk represent eternal verities, that our instincts and hereditary tendencies came to us by special favor of the Deity. We thank God we were not born Jews or Mussulmans, or what not, when if we had been so born we should have thanked God for it with the same fervency. We have a natural contempt for foreigners, for men of alien tones of thought. The man of action looks down upon the man of thought, who returns the other's disdain. The poet despises the mathematician, and so on. We naturally hate what we cannot understand. Indeed, that is the true definition of hatred,—misunderstanding. If we really understood our enemy we could never hate him,—he would cease to be our enemy. There is nothing we resent so much as being misunderstood. There is no person so offensive as the man who deems that he can take our measure as we stand, unless, indeed, it be the woman who has the same conceit of herself and who is continually stroking our fur the wrong way to show how thoroughly she comprehends us. Yet the misjudgments we object to we are continually visiting upon our neighbor. Hawthorne once

purposed writing a tale to show how we are all wronged and wrongers, avenging one another. It is a pity he did not carry his purpose into execution.

All men are better than they appear on the surface. The world has been too much with them. The divine soul finds itself choked and stifled by the accidents of temperament and environment; it is disheartened by the multitudinous contradictions in this paradoxical world; the brain is stupid and muddled and fails to recognize the right; the flesh is weak: nevertheless the divine soul dwells latent below the surface, and may flare out at any moment in some sudden and unlooked-for manner.

Each idler I meet in square or in street  
 Hath within him what all that's without him belies,—  
 The miraculous infinite heart of man,  
 With its countless capabilities!

\* \* \* \* \*

And the fool that last year, at her Majesty's ball,  
 Sickened me so with his simper of pride,  
 Is the hero now heard of, the first on the wall,  
 With the bayonet-wound in his side.

Great emergencies call forth the great soul.  
 War in the twinkling of an eye turns village  
 drunkards and pettifogging lawyers into gen-



erals and statesmen. Love transforms Cymon from a brute into a man. Necessity makes Shakespeare a dramatist; accident reveals to Scott his true powers. The most commonplace men and women have passed through the fool's paradise of love, when they were divine beings worshipping divinity, and in that fool's paradise they for a brief moment found their true selves, saw deep into the soul of their consort. That flitting dream was in truth an awakening, the brief opening of the spiritual eye. When the world of facts has passed away, our dreams may remain. The man of common sense asks for realities, the poet knows that only illusions are true.

Look you, the man whom you hate,—are there not women who worship him, children who look up to him? Who sees the true man,—you who hate him, or they who love him? Love is a divine delight, it reaches out over and around its object into the illimitable, it is a part of the Over-Soul, of the Infinite, of God. Hatred is painful, it strains and racks the body, it blinds the vision, it makes man conscious of his mortal limitations. Love sees the virtues that are of the soul, hatred only the diseases of the skin. “All men have their faults, and stealing was Bill's,” said a weeping widow over

the corpse of a desperado, shot in attempted burglary. And grotesque, ludicrous as the expression may seem, she was right. She knew that not in the robber, the law-breaker, the out-cast, did the real man shine forth, but in those rarer moods of kindness and generosity when he was friend and husband. Perhaps when two enemies, who have refused to see any good in each other on this earth, meet hereafter in another world free from the muddy vesture of decay which clogs their vision here, the first thought of each will be, "Is this the beautiful soul that I maligned and hated?"

"Alas!" says Heine, "one ought really to write against no one in this world. We are all of us sick and suffering enough in this great Lazaretto, and many a piece of polemical reading involuntarily reminds me of a revolting quarrel in a little hospital at Cracow, where I was an accidental spectator, and where it was terrible to hear the sick mocking and reviling each other's infirmities, how emaciated consumptives ridiculed those who were bloated with dropsy, how one laughed at the cancer in the nose of another, and he again jeered the locked-jaw and distorted eyes of his neighbors, until finally those who were mad with fever sprang naked from bed, and tore the coverings

and sheets from the maimed bodies around, and there was nothing to be seen but revolting misery and mutilation."

Most of us feel like good fellows wronged. We know that we should have done better had not the world arrayed itself against us. That is why books like "The New Héloïse," "The Robbers," "Werther," "Réné," "Obermann," "Childe Harold," "Les Misérables,"—wild protests against the whole scheme of society,—have so shaken the world and still find young souls to fire and perturb; why all the various romances of crime, from "Jean Sbogar" to "The Outcasts of Poker Flat,"—laying bare the native goodness below the criminal exterior,—have won perennial popularity; why the right of the homely heroine to love and be loved as emphasized in "Jane Eyre" electrified all England and America; why the neglected heroines of Ouida and the hoydens of Rhoda Broughton are favorites with young women; why Xavier de Maistre's touching "Leper of Aosta" was followed by an epidemic of stories whose heroes were pariahs and outcasts through disease or deformity; why the persecuted heroine, the maligned hero, are still favorite figures on the stage and in the penny-dreadfuls.

Wisely and tenderly has George Eliot written, "It is with men as with trees: if you lop off their finest branches, into which they were pouring their young life-juice, the wounds will be healed over by some rough boss, some odd excrescence, and what might have been a grand tree expanding into liberal shade is but a whimsical misshapen trunk. Many an irritating fault, many an unlovely oddity, has come of a hard sorrow, which has crushed and maimed the nature just when it was expanding into plenteous beauty; and the trivial, erring life which we visit with our harsh blame may be but as the unsteady motion of a man whose best limb is withered." The world judges only results, it recks not of causes. The archangel ruined becomes to the popular imagination a devil with horns and a tail.

Nor should we be too hasty in blaming the world. Human nature is limited: if it cannot without danger overleap its limitations, then it were wise to work out its salvation within them. It is better to be deep as a lake than broad as a marsh. Hatred is wrong, yet if hatred for things without our line of vision develop or strengthen love for those that are in sight

(For love and hate, and faith and unfaith, each  
Bind great to lesser souls in sympathy),

then hatred is temporarily right,—right relatively, though not absolutely. Speaking in the abstract, tolerance is better than intolerance; but the tolerance of indifference is a less potent instrument for good than the intolerance of enthusiasm. Patriotism is mean and narrow and exclusive, a bar to the universal brotherhood which the prophet looks forward to; yet in our present semi-barbaric state patriotism is a virtue that calls out our noblest qualities, which without this stimulus would lie latent and unrecognized. If, in the hurry of existence, we must needs make snap judgments and harsh criticisms or none at all, then for the moment let us content ourselves with such judgments and such criticisms.

But let us beware of thinking that here is the whole truth. While temporizing for the sake of the present, let us preserve intact our larger hope for the future. It may indeed seem better to be deep as a lake than broad as a marsh. Yet do not let us despair of the marsh. Wait until the kindly waters have penetrated further and widened their circuit. Then the marsh will give place to fertile plains; flowers will burgeon and plenteous harvests ripen where before was only an empty waste of water. In the great future that the centuries will bring to

men, they may look back with tender pity upon the narrowness and pettiness which the present cannot escape from ; they may recognize that it was necessary for the best interests of the race to go through the narrow and petty period.



## POET AND HUMORIST.

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ALL thoughtful men are impressed by the disparity between man—who claims to be a reasonable and immortal being, who appears upon this planet for a brief to-day, a halting-ground between two eternities, with mysteries pressing above, around, and within him for solution—and his absorbing interest in what theologians call “the world” (ranking it with the flesh and the devil as among the enemies of the soul) and what metaphysicians call the relative, the conditioned, the Non-Ego, and many fine names besides,—the little stage of human action upon which men play their brief parts, with all the little aims, the little triumphs, the little failures, the little joys, the little sorrows, that seem so great to little men. The average man, however, though he may occasionally be stirred from his security when a marvel like birth or death enters into his own circle, soon returns to common working life and the feelings and habits which “the world” engenders. We call him the practical man, the man of common sense. Other men also return to daily

life, retaining a vivid impression of their deeper thoughts, feeling the contrast keenly, but struck rather with its oddity than its sadness. These are the humorists,—the Horaces, the Montaignes, the Lambs, the Howellses. Other men, again, recoil with scorn or wrath or pity from the lower side of life. The vanity, the transitoriness, of all human pursuits presses at all times upon their consciousness. They would fain have the whole world be as men picture it to themselves when temporarily regarding it under the influence of their higher thoughts only. These are the poets, the prophets, the religious enthusiasts,—the Buddhas, Dantes, Carlyles, Tolstoïs. They are often one-sided, they often lack the balance of mind which humor bestows, but their very one-sidedness makes them the more intense, and intensity is more powerful than humor. It is these men who impress themselves most upon their fellows and add most largely to the vein of thought which feeds the moral life of society. The world puts its own interpretation on their teaching, and brings it within the possibilities of actual life; nevertheless it receives it and abides by it, until other teaching comes to supersede it.

Of course that is but a rough classification ;



these two main groups of thoughtful men are subject to infinite subdivision. Not all who renounce the world renounce it in the same temper, not all who accept it accept it in the same way. Few studies are more interesting than to mark the attitudes which men of various shades of opinions present to the world. Some, as the ascetics of all ages and faiths, deny it, and flee to cloister, hermitage, or spiritual isolation. Others believe with Mrs. Browning that

God hath anointed us with holy oil  
To wrestle, not to reign,

and that to refuse to enter the lists is an error. "I cannot," says Milton, in a well-known passage, "praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust or heat." Pascal wondered at the folly of those who "pass their life without reflecting on its issue. The carelessness which they betray in an affair where their person, their interest, their whole eternity, is embarked, strikes me with amazement and astonishment; it is a monster to my apprehension." Heine, on the contrary,

laughed at the folly of men like Pascal who puzzle their brains over the unknowable :

By the sea, by the dreary, darkening sea,  
Stands a youth,  
His heart all sorrowing, his head all doubting,  
And with gloomiest accent he questions the billows :

“ Oh, solve me life's riddle, I pray ye,  
The torturing ancient enigma  
O'er which full many a brain hath long puzzled,  
Old heads in hieroglyph-marked mitres,  
Heads in turbans and caps mediæval,  
Wig-covered pates, and a thousand others,  
Sweating, wearying heads of mortals,—  
Tell me, what meaneth Man ?  
Whence came he hither ? Where goes he hence ?  
Who dwells there on high in the radiant planets ? ”

The billows are murmuring their murmurs unceasing,  
Wild blows the wind, the dark clouds are fleeing,  
The stars are still gleaming, so calmly and cold,  
And a fool awaits an answer.

Horace and the Epicureans would have agreed with Heine. The great gods recline in Olympus careless of mankind. Immortality is at best a great Perhaps. All we know for certain is the brief space between the cradle and the grave. *Carpe diem*. Extract all the pleasure you can from the fleeting moment. “ Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow you die.” But mere Epicureanism has been difficult of attainment,

save to mental sluggards, since the advent of Christianity.

A vast hope has traversed the earth, and our eyes,  
In spite of ourselves, we must raise to the skies :

so sings Owen Meredith in the splendid lines which he has stolen without acknowledgment from Musset. Here is how a modern sceptic—a sceptic who would fain lift his eyes heavenward—has in one of his bitterest moments translated the doctrines of Epicurus :

Eat, drink, and play, and think that this is bliss :  
There is no heaven but this.

There is no hell

Save earth, which serves the purpose doubly well,  
Seeing it visits still

With equalest apportionment of ill

Both good and bad alike, and brings to one same dust

The unjust and the just

With Christ who is not risen.

Eat, drink, and die, for we are souls bereaved :

Of all the creatures under heaven's wide seope,

We are most hopeless, who had once most hope,

And most beliefless, that had most belief.

Clough's attitude, like that of Schopenhauer, Tolstoi, Mallock, is one of personal grief and sorrow at the loss of the beliefs or the illusions which glorify life. George Eliot, and in a lesser degree Tourgenief, seem to brood with

large-hearted, all-embracing, tender pity over the great mass of humanity, dancing as it were upon a false bottom projected into chaos, with infinite gulfs yawning below them, with infinite possibilities of pain environing them. Carlyle recoils with wrath and scorn from the spectacle. Swift, Heine, and Voltaire jeer at it. Hugo's intense egotism rejoices simply in finding an arena where he can exhibit his superiority; he is a god addressing beings of a lower order, and glad to find that they are lower. Men whose egotism is milder than Hugo's, whose imagination is blunter or less morbid, if you will, than that of Carlyle, Swift, or Tolstoï, but whose organization is too fine to tempt them into the chase after mere material comfort, look on with more or less of scientific, artistic, or sociological curiosity. Balzac is one of these; so are Mérimée, Daudet, Henry James.

The humorist occupies a somewhat anomalous position. We have already defined him as one who is struck by the contrast between the inner and the outer man, the subjective and the objective, the ideal and the real, or whatever awkward metaphysical terminology you may prefer to use, but is struck by the oddity rather than the sadness of the contrast. We may go further. He is the connecting link between the poet, the

thinker, the child of the idea, and the practical man,—the man of the world, the Philistine. By instinct he belongs to the former class, but his reason is broad and sane enough to recognize the logic of the Philistine's position. We are all of us half men at best, and the deeper, the more intense, we are, the narrower we are likely to be. We may be narrow and intense as children of the idea, narrow and intense as Philistines. The humorist dimly sees that the whole truth can only be reached by union of two half truths. Material progress is as potent a factor in the evolution of the race as intellectual progress. Food must be raised, clothes must be had, houses must be built, printing-presses must be invented, railroads must be laid down, or the philosopher would starve and freeze, the idea would never be disseminated. If the Philistine were not so deaf to the claims of the idea, if thoughts of the future interfered with his work in the present, he would not be so strenuous a Philistine, and the material progress of the world would suffer. In a thoughtful essay George Eliot has pointed out the dangers of what she ingeniously calls other-worldliness. Worldliness and other-worldliness may both be pushed to lamentable extremes. It is the humorist who preserves the balance between the two. The humorist does not under-

value the deeper side of human existence, he is keenly alive to the claims of the mystical and the supernatural; but he cleaves, also, to practical life, to the enjoyments of the world, to all that is genial and good-humored, useful and honorable. Goethe enforces this truth in "Faust," where he gives Mephistopheles to his hero as a constant companion from the very moment when the latter abandons the extravagant idealism of his youth and recognizes the need of a world of men for him.

The gentlest-hearted and the broadest-minded of all modern humorists was William M. Thackeray. Some one has said that he was as good a poet as could be made out of brains. In truth, he had just too much brains to be a poet. A keen sense of the thin partitions between the sublime and the ridiculous may debar a man from attempting the sublime, yet a sense of the ridiculous is an addition to the mental equipment. "The saints were all a little cracked," says one of the characters in Henry James's "The Madonna of the Future." And so, it may be added, are the poets. Poet and saint often insist on closing one eye and seeing only out of the other. Thackeray kept both open, and he had all the breadth of mind, the generosity, the tolerance, the irresolution,

the lack of intense conviction, which characterize one whose vision is not sufficiently restricted. If he had shut one eye he might have been more single-minded, more zealous, more confident, more saint-like, more poetic.

Here is how this worldling defends his worldliness: "I was thinking about Joseph Bullar's doctrine after I went to bed, founded on what I cannot but think a blasphemous asceticism, which has obtained in the world ever so long, and which is disposed to curse, hate, and undervalue the world altogether. Why should we? What we see here of this world is but an expression of God's will, so to speak,—a beautiful earth and sky and sea, beautiful affections and sorrows, wonderful changes and developments of creation, suns rising, stars shining, birds singing, clouds and shadows changing and fading, people loving each other, smiling and crying, the multiplied phenomena of Nature, multiplied in fact and fancy, in Art and Science, in every way that a man's intellect or education or imagination can be brought to bear. And who is to say that we are to ignore all this, or not value them and love them, because there is another unknown world yet to come? Why, that unknown future world is but a manifestation of God

Almighty's will, and a development of Nature, neither more nor less than this in which we are, and an angel glorified or a sparrow on a gutter are equally part of His creation. The light upon all the saints in Heaven is just as much and no more God's work, as the sun which shall shine to-morrow upon this infinitesimal speck of creation, and under which I shall read, please God, a letter from my kindest Lady and friend. About my future state I don't know; I leave it in the disposal of the awful Father,—but for to-day I thank God that I can love you, and that you yonder and others besides are thinking of me with a tender regard. Hallelujah may be greater in degree than this, but not in kind, and countless ages of stars may be blazing infinitely, but you and I have a right to rejoice and believe in our little part and to trust in to-day as in to-morrow."





## A PLEA FOR PLAGIARISM.

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WHAT should be the main object of a writer?—a selfish desire to tickle his own vanity, or an altruistic pleasure in giving pleasure to his reader? If the latter, and if he succeeds, why should the reader inquire too curiously into the sources of his pleasure? In enjoying a dish you don't care to know where its constituent elements came from. The Philistine confesses that it is difficult for him to summon up any indignation over the most flagrant instances of plagiarism. Indeed, if he ever finds it more difficult to say brilliant things than to steal them, he may turn plagiarist himself. He is rejoiced that Shakespeare and Molière had so little literary conscience,—Shakespeare whom poor Greene called “an upstart crow beautified with our feathers,” and Molière who “reconquered his own wherever he found it.” He is grateful to Owen Meredith for having transformed George Sand's “Lavinia” into “Lucille;” to Charles Reade for having altered one of Maquet's dramas into his novel of “White Lies;” to Thomas Hardy for having adapted a chapter

from "Georgia Scenes" so as to fit it into "The Trumpet Major." He is grateful to these authors for the pleasure they have given him, as it is more than likely he would never have come across the originals. And the original authors ought to have been unselfish enough to rejoice that their creations had given this additional delight.

"What matters it to the world," says Longfellow, "whether I or you or another man did such a deed or wrote such a book, so be it the deed and book were well done?" And, *a fortiori*, what matters it who gets the credit? The perfection of form which the proverbs of all nations have attained is owing to the fact that their rough edges have been gradually smoothed and polished as they passed from mouth to mouth without any authorial vanity to hinder their progress. The same is true of the popular ballads and epics: it may even be true of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey." In modern times a large proportion of the wise sayings of great authors, which have become embalmed as familiar quotations, can be traced back through many hands to the rude quarry from which they were rough-hewn. And as to incident, any one who has the smallest familiarity with comparative folk-lore and mythology is well aware that originality is impossible.

To show how much the world loses by this eager and fruitless chase after originality, the Philistine has put together the following, which he calls

A LITTLE ESSAY ON THE COMMONPLACE.

God loves the common people, or he would not have made so many of them. Godlike wisdom is to revere common men and common things. It is so wonderful to our neurologists that a man can see without his eyes that it does not occur to them that it is just as wonderful that he should see with them; and that is ever the difference between the wise and the unwise: the latter wonders at what is unusual, the wise man wonders at the usual. Am I to view the Stupendous with stupid indifference because I have seen it twice, or two hundred, or two million times?

No age ever seemed the age of romance to itself, yet romance never ceases,—now and formerly and evermore it exists, strictly speaking, in Reality alone. The thing that *is*, what can be so wonderful, what especially to us that *are* can have such significance? Paint the meanest object in its actual truth; world-old, yet new and never-ending; an indestructible portion of the miraculous All,—your picture of it would be a poem.

The value of all great art is in its hold upon the commonplace. I remember, when in my younger days I had heard of the wonders of Italian painting, I fancied the great pictures would be great strangers; some surprising combination of color and form; a foreign wonder, barbaric pearl and gold, like the spontoons and standards of the militia, which play such pranks in the eyes and imaginations of school-boys. I was to see and acquire I knew not what. When I came at last to Rome and saw with eyes the pictures, I found that genius left to novices the gay and fantastic and ostentatious, and itself pierced directly to the simple and true; that it was familiar and sincere; that it was the old eternal fact I had met already in so many forms,—unto which I had lived; that it was the plain *you and me* I knew so well,—had left at home in so many conversations. I now require this of all pictures, that they domesticate me, not that they dazzle me. Pictures must not be too picturesque. Nothing astonishes men so much as common sense and plain dealing. All great actions have been simple, and all great pictures are.

As with pictures, so with poems. The poet's office is to be a Voice, not of one crying in the wilderness to a knot of already magnetized acolytes, but singing amid the throng of men

and lifting their common aspirations and sympathies (so first clearly revealed to themselves) on the wings of his song to a purer ether and a wider reach of view. In the great poets there is an exquisite sensibility both of soul and sense that sympathizes like gossamer sea-moss with every movement of the element in which it floats, but which is rooted on the solid rock of our common sympathies.

Paint us an angel, if you can, with a floating violet robe, and a face paled by the celestial light ; paint us yet oftener a Madonna, turning her mild face upward and opening her arms to welcome the divine glory ; but do not impose on us any æsthetic rules which shall banish from the region of Art those old women scraping carrots with their work-worn hands, those heavy clowns taking holiday in a dingy pot-house, those rounded backs and stupid, weather-beaten faces that have bent over the spade and done the rough work of the world, those homes with their tin pans, their brown pitchers, their rough curs, and their clusters of onions. In this world there are so many of these common coarse people, who have no picturesque sentimental wretchedness ! It is so needful we should remember their existence, else we may happen to leave them quite out of our religion and philosophy, and frame lofty theories which

only fit a world of extremes. Therefore let Art always remind us of them; therefore let us always have men ready to give the loving pains of a life to the faithful representing of common things,—men who see beauty in these commonplace things and delight in showing how kindly the light of heaven falls on them. And such men will always represent the higher Art of their day. It is in vain that we look for genins to reiterate its miracles in the old arts; it is its instinct to find beauty and holiness in new and necessary facts, in the field and roadside, in the shop and mill. Proceeding from a religious heart it will raise to a divine use the railroad, the insurance office, the joint stock company, our law, our primary assemblies, our commerce, the galvanic battery, the electric jar, the prism, and the chemist's retort, in which we seek now only an economical use.

What a more than regal mystery encircles the poorest of souls for us! Well said St. John Chrysostom, with his lips of gold, "The true Shekinah is man." There is but one temple in the world, and that is the body of man. Bending before man is a reverence done to this revelation in the flesh. We touch heaven when we lay our hands on a human being. The greatest of the works of man is a less thing than the meanest man, for the mean-

est man has within him passions and emotions and high longings and strivings which no art can fitly interpret. The real value of the *Iliad*, or the Transfiguration, is as signs of power; billows or ripples they are of the stream of tendency; tokens of the everlasting effort to produce, which even in its worst estate the soul betrays.

Words are finite organs of the infinite mind. They cannot cover the dimensions of what is in truth. They break, chop, and impoverish it. Converse with a mind that is grandly simple, and literature looks like word-catching.

The man who is never conscious of a state of feeling or of intellectual effort entirely beyond expression by any form of words whatsoever, is a mere creature of language. I can hardly believe there are any such men. Think for a moment of the power of music. The nerves that make us alive to it spread in the most sensitive region of the marrow, just where it is widening to run upwards into the hemispheres. It has its seat in the regions of sense rather than of thought. Yet it produces a continuous and, as it were, logical sequence of emotional and intellectual changes; but how different from trains of thought proper! how entirely beyond the reach of symbols!—Think of human passions as compared with all phrases!



Did you ever hear of a man's growing lean by the reading of "Romeo and Juliet," or blowing his brains out because Desdemona was maligned? There are a good many symbols, even, that are more expressive than words. I remember a young wife who had to part with her husband for a time. She did not write a mournful poem; indeed, she was a silent person, and perhaps hardly said a word about it; but she quietly turned of a deep orange color with jaundice. A great many people in this world have but one form of rhetoric for their profoundest experiences,—namely, to waste away and die. When a man can *read* his paroxysm of feeling is passing. When he can *read*, his thought has slackened its hold.

I think most readers of Shakespeare find themselves thrown into exalted mental conditions, like those produced by music. Then they may drop the book, to pass at once into the region of thought without words. We may happen to be very dull folks, you and I, but we get glimpses now and then of a sphere of spiritual possibilities, where we, dull as we are now, may sail in vast circles round the largest compass of earthly intelligences.

Indeed, we might go further. Men are more nearly equal than we suppose. The disparities in power are superficial; and all frank and



searching conversation, in which a man lays himself open to his brother, apprises each of their radical unity. When two persons sit and converse in a thoroughly good understanding, the remark is sure to be made, See, how we have disputed about words! Let a clear, apprehensive mind, such as every man knows among his friends, converse with the most commanding poetic genius, I think it would appear that there was no inequality, such as men fancy, between them; that a perfect understanding, a like receiving, a like perceiving, abolished differences; and the poet would confess that his creative imagination gave him no deep advantage, but only the superficial one that he could express himself, and the other could not; that his advantage was a knack, which might impose on indolent men, but could not impose on lovers of truth; for they know the tax of talent, or what a price of greatness the power of expression too often pays. I believe it is the conviction of the purest men that the net amount of man and man does not much vary. Each is incomparably superior to his companion in some faculty. His want of skill in other directions has added to his fitness for his own work. Each seems to have some compensation yielded to him by his infirmity, and every hindrance operates as a concentration of his force.

Now, here is an admirable essay, full of the choicest wit and wisdom, of the deepest philosophy. It is the first fruit of a new system of producing literature which the Philistine has invented, but which he is too noble to patent, because he believes that its general introduction may revolutionize literature. It is a mosaic, a composite, made up in the following manner : a sentence from Lincoln ; four lines from Emerson ; nine from Carlyle ; a paragraph from Emerson ; a paragraph from Lowell ; a paragraph from George Eliot with the concluding lines from Emerson ; two paragraphs made up from Carlyle, St. John Chrysostom, Novalis, and Emerson ; two paragraphs from Oliver Wendell Holmes, and the final paragraph from Emerson.

Why should we not all stop endeavoring to produce original literature and write our essays according to this system ? Originality, in fact, is out of the question. Modern literature is a mere shifting and rearrangement of old ideas into new combinations. And when an idea has been clothed in felicitous phrase, phrase as well as idea should henceforth be public property. Do you write to tickle your own vanity, or to please and instruct your reader ? If the former, continue your ignoble search for

novelty ; if the latter, take the loftier path of plagiarism.

Consider, too, how much more amiable we minor gentlemen of the pen would become, how the jealousy and irritability which have been charged against us would disappear, if this new system were generally adopted ! We would no longer feel a personal resentment against the authors who had forestalled our choicest thoughts ; we would not so savagely echo that denunciation of Donatus,—

*Pereant illi qui ante nos nostra dixerunt.*

We would not gnash our teeth when we read on the printed page what we should like to have said. We would carefully put it down in our note-book, and in due course it would appear in an essay or a story.

Consider, further, how greatly the reader would be a gainer. Occasionally, but not very often, unless he had committed to memory the whole of literature, he would come across a familiar thought in familiar language. But good literature never wearies the true lover of the beautiful. And current literature, under the proposed new system, would no longer be ephemeral and flimsy, but would present the best of good literature.

But a still greater benefit remains to be mentioned. Literature, we are informed by good judges, is one of the few things which does not keep pace with the general march of intellect, which does not improve. If you want great poetry, great drama, great philosophy, you must still go back to the poets and sages of antiquity. The great men in other lines of activity survive only in their names, their works have been swept aside in the onward march of the race. If you want a steamboat, you don't go back to Fulton, or a locomotive, you don't go back to Stephenson. Ordinary mechanics, with meagre brains and small education, will turn out work which would be the despair of either Stephenson or Fulton. The alphabet of Cadmus has been simplified and improved. The geometry of Euclid has developed into a more perfect science. Coke's law has been outgrown, Sir Astley Cooper's physie has been superseded. In all these lines of human endeavor there is no mad passion for originality, each new thinker adds a little to the sum of knowledge and forfeits his own individuality in the work. Now, if literature were treated in the same way, perhaps that would improve also. Let every great thought, every felicitous phrase, become a part of the world's stock of wisdom, to be drawn upon at will without any question of originality

or accusation of plagiarism. As mechanical inventions improve by the gradual accretions of new ideas, so might literature develop until the daily newspaper contained essays and editorials that would outshine Socrates and Plato.



## OF MODERN FICTION.

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ANY cold-blooded man who has really attained the ideal which modern philosophy sets before us—who has learned to suspend his judgment on all disputed and disputable points—must look with infinite amusement upon the warmth and vehemence of controversy. Our most cherished faiths are the merest accidents of birth, of temperament, or of environment, yet we look upon them as vital and sacred. Our axioms, as some one has said, are things we have never heard questioned, yet we would consider any who questioned them as fit candidates for an asylum. Our reasoning powers are unable to cope with any one real *fact* (noumenon as distinguished from phenomenon) in the universe, yet we all speak with the confidence of oracles. To the ideal being whom we have just imagined, human thought must present itself as a chaos of individual opinions, in which one set of fools squabbles with another because the confusion of the one differs from the confusion of the other. The great Jones brays and is applauded by his fellow-donkeys.

The great Robinson gabbles in opposition, to the delight of his fellow-geese. Jones and Robinson have their little day and go down into oblivion ; their place is taken by a new set of geese and donkeys, and the eternal farce goes on.

The controversy as to the proper field of fiction, for instance,—who shall decide it? It is not a question of great public moment, and as a rule it has been kept within the limits of courtesy ; yet some bad blood has been engendered. We have got over believing, with our ancestors, that a man must be wickedly and wilfully blind because he refuses to think as we do ; we still cherish a conviction that his refusal comes from a limitation of intellect. We have sympathy for bodily infirmities. We have not even forgiveness for mental ones that offend our own vanity. Contempt is the anger we visit upon a man for having insufficiently cultivated the faculties by which he judges us, and no sort of anger is fiercer or more unrelenting.

Here are several schools of fiction clamoring with noisy insistence for the recognition of their own canons of art. One says in substance, "Give us life as it is, not young people's ideals of life,—the commonplace, humdrum existence

around us, without any false glamour thrown over it; but leave out of the picture what is base, impure, or unclean." Another, "Give us life as it is, and leave in the impurity, for that is a necessary part of the picture of life. Man in his present condition may not be a very noble animal; he is nobler than the waxwork ideal of the novelist. Flesh and blood have weaknesses that waxwork does not possess, but flesh and blood are superior to waxwork. God is a better artist than the novelist. The man who struggles and falls yet still struggles upward is a finer being than the flabby imitation of modern fiction, who keeps at a dead level of superiority without the need of struggling." A third says, "It is the province of fiction to idealize human life; to paint it only in its grander and higher manifestations; to seize upon the situations, the thoughts, and the feelings which are moving and elevating." A fourth (and the Philistine confesses a kindness to this school) simply urges that, as the public will not tolerate the whole truth, it is just as well to fall back upon the old romantic traditions, and give them novels whose scenes are frankly and honestly laid in an ideal world and bathed in the light which never was on sea or land. After all, may not the Ideal be the higher Real, a dim prophetic premonition of what we are all strug-



gling to reach? The higher aims and aspirations of the present, and not its wonted moods, represent the real life of the future, and the efforts of the artist should be directed towards bringing the future closer to us. "We descend in order to meet," says Emerson, and the meeting-ground is what we denominate real life, but with every completed cycle the meeting-ground is higher up and the Ideal comes nearer of attainment.

One thing, indeed, seems pretty certain. In the Anglo-Saxon literature of the present realism is simply impossible. No novelist among us dares to paint life as it is. The famous words in Thackeray's preface to "*Pendennis*" are as true to-day as they ever were: "Since the author of *Tom Jones* was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a MAN. We must drape him, and give him a certain conventional simper. Society will not tolerate the Natural in our Art. Many ladies have remonstrated, and subscribers left me, because, in the course of the story, I described a young man resisting and affected by temptation. My object was to say that he had the passions to feel, and the manliness and generosity to overcome them. You will not hear—it is best to know it—what moves

in the real world, what passes in society, in the clubs, colleges, mess-rooms—what is the life and talk of your sons.” The charge was repeated by M. Taine, and it has recently and almost simultaneously been revived by three well-known novelists,—Ouida, Boyesen, and Rider Haggard.

The entire atmosphere of modern fiction in England and America is false and conventional. It assumes that the world is exactly the sort of place that it appears to the foolish eyes of a boy or a girl. In real life we have to condone in our friends, or haply we regard with genial charity in ourselves, faults and offences which as readers or writers of fiction we pretend are beyond condonation, almost beyond charity. In morals, in religion, even in art, few of us have the courage of our convictions when we put our convictions into print. Few of us dare to say in cold type what we would be quite willing to say to our friends,—even to an intelligent female friend. We have one way of speaking to our intimates, another to our acquaintances, and still another to the general public.

Of course there is much to be said in favor of this. It is dangerous to dispel too early the illusions of generous-hearted boys and maidens,

—to teach them too early that the real struggle of life is not to be heroic but to keep from being despicable. The history of human progress shows how Nature herself has taken rude men into her lap and told them nursery-tales to amuse and edify them,—has frightened them into doing right by shadowy threats of punishment, or bribed them by shadowy promises of rewards. The ideals which have clustered around certain semi-mythical figures have helped men in their upward struggle. William Tell, and Damon and Pythias, and Pocahontas, and hundreds of other gentle and gracious myths, have excited noble emotions in the breasts of the many who believed in them. You yourself, my dear sir, have no doubt been helped in youth, by the ideals you formed of older men, to that stage of comparative virtue in which you may have furnished an equally unsubstantial but equally helpful ideal to the weaker or younger men around you.

All this is very true, but it is only one side of the picture. In the lives of all of us there comes that tragic period when we wake from the golden dreams of youth to the dreary realities of maturity, when the contrast between the ideal and the real forces itself upon us with keenest irony, and the chill of disenchantment creeps

into heart and brain. The tragedy of this period is intensified a thousandfold to those of us who have looked at life through the medium of books and taken too seriously the lessons of the latter. Because men and women are not what we had imagined, our faith in them goes down in black despair; because literature encouraged our delusions, we cast it aside as an unworthy lie.

Then I said, "I covet truth :  
Beauty is unripe childhood's cheat ;  
I leave it behind with the games of youth."

This is the frame of mind which Hawthorne has portrayed in that most awful story "Goodman Brown." This is the frame of mind in which the "literature of despair" has its origin,—Réné, Werther, Obermann, Childe Harold. This is the frame of mind in which cynicism is born. Heine, says Lowell, was "a sentimentalist soured." Thackeray, according to an acute French critic, was an idealist "furious at having been disappointed."

Fiction is not real because it is realistic. So long as the conventional atmosphere is retained, it comes no nearer to the truth because it details the lives of apothecaries and newspaper reporters and bookbinders' apprentices than if

it clung to the dragons and knights and ladies of old romance. Indeed, the very realism of its details makes it more profoundly and hopelessly unreal. Children are not likely to imbibe false ideals from Jack the Giant-Killer or Little Red Riding-hood, they are almost sure to be misled by almost any modern book that is written for their benefit. Therefore, if we are not brave enough, or if the times are not yet ripe, for the whole truth in our fiction, let us have good honest romance, which does not pretend to concern itself with real life.



## REALIST AND IDEALIST.

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THE self-styled realistic novelists in America are fond of proclaiming themselves the advance-guard of a continuous literary movement which has culminated in "Daisy Miller" and "Silas Lapham." This is as it should be. The amiable delusion of all intellectual leaders is that to them has been intrusted the saying of the final and clinching word. But they lose sight of the great principle of action and reaction by which man's efforts are directed. The course of human thought runs in cycles. If one generation is poetical, imaginative, idealistic, the next is prosaic, critical, realistic; and *vice versa*. The age of great things done carelessly is followed by the age of small things done carefully; and *vice versa*. One generation considers the matter, the other the manner; one the value of the thing itself, the other the elegance of the setting. An age of earnest and serious purpose is preceded as well as followed by an age of mockery or frivolity, an age of poetry by one of prose. The extravagant

idealism of the early Spanish romances was succeeded by the humorous realism of "Don Quixote" and the picaresque novels. The careless strength and grandeur of the Elizabethan poets finds its contrast in the airy nothings, the elaborate felicities, of the Queen Anne men. The sonorous voices of the early Victorians have given place to the limpid tones of the later Victorians. Of course, the general truth is but crudely indicated here. The classifications are not precise. A pioneer like Keats may appear before the reaction has set in, a veteran like Browning may survive to become the prophet of a new reaction. America has proved no exception to this general law. The literature which began with Washington Irving and other pleasant imitators of Addison, Steele, and Goldsmith, soon broadened and deepened into the romance of Hawthorne, the philosophy of Emerson, the poetry of Walt Whitman, and is now reverting to its former tendencies in the elegant trifling of Howells and James. There are signs in the air that a new reaction will soon set in, or mayhap has already begun. But what will be the final outcome of the struggle, and whether, when Earth is wan and her cities have no sound nor tread, the Last Man shall stand amid the skeletons of nations with a romance or a realistic novel—with Hawthorne

or Howells—in his hand,—these, indeed, are questions not lightly to be answered.

Evolution means progress, and where the vulgar eye sees only in the recurrence of similar phenomena the return of the wheels of being to the old groove, a deeper philosophical insight recognizes an infinitesimal gain at each new revolution. No great movement has been unmixed good. Every reaction frees the human mind from a small portion of the error that accompanied the original movement, while the error in the reaction calls in turn for elimination by a similar process.

Every thinking man has within him the possibility of becoming either an idealist or a realist, and not so much his own volition as the accident of birth and environment shall decide the question for him. Faust, whom Goethe makes the type of the aspiring nature in man, says of himself,—

Two souls, alas! reside within my breast,  
And each withdraws from, and repels, its brother.  
One with tenacious organs holds in love  
And clinging lust the world in its embraces;  
The other strongly sweeps this dust above  
Into the high ancestral spaces.

Every thinking man at the outset of his



career, at least, is conscious of this twofold soul. But whichever soul external forces may elect that he develop will be developed at the expense of the other. For "each withdraws from, and repels, its brother." Only by concentrating his energies within the mental and moral limitations of either one or the other can he hope to do any efficient work. To very few intellects, to here and there a Goethe or an Emerson, is it given to be at once symmetrical and strong. Most men purchase symmetry at the expense of strength, or strength at the expense of symmetry. For the intellectual leader strength is the prime requisite ; he must sacrifice symmetry ; he must be content to be a half man. If he becomes an idealist, he will hate and dislike the real ; if a realist, he will hate and dislike the ideal. Abstractly speaking, his hatred will be wrong. But the measure of our hatred is the measure of our love. A good hater is a more doughty warrior than an amiable pococurante. For the sake of the intense love which enables a great man to do his work, we pardon that hatred for all objects external to his range of vision by which he walls in his love and keeps it strong and deep. The fruits of love endure, they are brought forth in light and knowledge ; the fruits of hatred perish, they are produced in darkness and ignorance.

A stern contempt for the simpler humanities of life has ever been the note of the idealist. He enshrouds himself in his own virtue, his stomach revolts at eakes and ale. We who dwell within earshot of the market, who live and move and have our being amid the Philistines, are repelled by the haughty language in which Plato, Schiller, Milton, or Carlyle speaks of the common folk whom we love and marry, whom we invite to our fireside, who are our brethren, our friends, our acquaintanees, mayhap our taskmasters. We are repelled; yet in our saner moments we recognize that it is this haughtiness of attitude which keeps the poet and the seer unspotted from the world and enables them to do the thinking that shall purify the world. "It is not that we love to be alone," says Thoreau, "but that we love to soar; the company grows thinner and thinner till there is none at all. It is either the tribune on the plain, a sermon on the mount, or a very private ecstasy still higher up. We are none the less to aim at the summits, though the multitude does not ascend there." The saying has its truth, but not the whole truth. The ecstasy on the heights is excellent, but the sermon on the mount, the tribune on the plain, are likewise excellent. It is noble to soar, it is noble also to descend that we may meet. The message which the saint in

his ecstasy has wrested from the infinite must be interpreted to the hundreds on the mount, to the thousands on the plain, otherwise it is of no worth. Doubtless it will be shorn of some part of its glory at each successive transmission, but if only a single ray reaches the multitude they are to that extent bettered. To that extent the saint has not lived and suffered in vain.

All religion, philosophy, art, heroism, is the attempt of the individual to make intelligible to some other soul—in concrete moral, in uttered word, in carven stone, in acted deed—that vision of the perfect which suffuses his being. If he considered the masses and strove to reach them, the magnitude of his task would overwhelm him, his tongue would cleave to his mouth, his hand would lose its cunning. But he scorns the masses as Philistines, children of darkness, unregenerate sinners, and his very scorn nerves him to fashion his revelation in some form that will appeal to the chosen few,—the elect whom alone he deems it his mission to save. He does not know, it is as well he should not know, that these few in the course of the seasons will enlighten the many.

Let us vary the metaphor. The great thinker

scales the mountain-side, and delves deep into its caverns for the ore of truth. What cares he that the unthinking multitude are surging and wrangling at its base? what cares he though he have only strength to bear his precious burden to the surface? There at the surface it will be seen and recognized at its value by the one or two strenuous spirits who have followed in his traces. That thought heartens him to his task. But his followers have also their appointed task. Theirs it is to bear the nugget down into the market, where it shall eventually be cleansed of all dross, be rent into fragments, and pass into the common currency.

Thoughts that great hearts once broke for, we  
Breathe cheaply in the common air.  
The dust we trample heedlessly  
Throbb'd once in saints and heroes rare,  
Who perished, opening for their race  
New pathways to the commonplace.

The oracle has its interpreters. Buddha has his prophets, Goethe his commentators, Shakespeare his Gervinus, Kant his Cousin. Cousin and Gervinus, commentator, prophet, and interpreter, each in his own way is doing work as urgent as that of his master. Macaulay has been somewhat sneeringly called an ambassador from the educated few to the uneducated many. The sneer is, in fact, his highest ap-

plause, the curse is a blessing. We reverence the discoverer, but the pioneer, the settler, the colonist, the citizen, who succeed him form each an indispensable link in a mighty chain. Nature looks with equal eye on all.

This, then, is the history of all intellectual progress. The man who lives on the higher plane of his own being, who with mighty efforts has surmounted commonplaces, traditions, and conventions (surmounted, not skirted, their base), and who has strength enough to carry his intelligence a furlong farther into chaos, to snatch from the formless and the void the thought that shall revolutionize society in the coming generations, rarely has strength enough also to mould it into the logical and verbal perfection which will appeal to all educated and thinking men. Hence the obscurity that is complained of in a Browning, a Whitman, even an Emerson. But other men struggling towards the same goal, who have had their steps directed and their pathway smoothed by the original explorer, can use their untaxed energies in giving form and symmetry to the new truth. These men may even have more strength and use it more tellingly than the men who live on what we have called the higher plane. Tennyson is a greater poet than Whitman, though

Whitman's chief concern is with the idea, and Tennyson's with forms of expression. The discoverer of the felicitous word is as original as the discoverer of the new idea, and may be the greater man of the two.

Nature, indeed, refuses to be classified; she laughs at scientific precision. You cannot draw lines through the rainbow, and say here yellow begins and green ends. The same difficulty attends any effort to distinguish sharply idealist from realist. Hitherto we have been endeavoring in a broad and general way to indicate the progress of the idea in the great creative period,—the idealistic period. To fall back upon Thoreau's figure, the idealistic is that period when the ecstatic vision is revealed and interpreted to the hundreds on the mount. But its mission is not yet ended, the thousands on the plain must be reached, the idea must become a part of the heritage of man. The thoughts that great hearts have broken for must be breathed cheaply in the common air, else the great hearts have broken in vain. Saints and heroes rare have perished in vain unless they have succeeded in opening for their race

New pathways to the commonplace.

Therefore the creative period is followed by the

critical, the assimilative, the realistic period, when the idea is dissected and analyzed by the critic; played upon by the kaleidoscopic fancy of the humorist and the artist in words; sncered at by the cynic; discussed angrily and doubtfully at first, but later with wiser apprehension, by the Philistine, until at last its benign influence permeates everywhere.

On the realist the necessity of limiting himself, of sacrificing symmetry to strength, presses as heavily as on the idealist. He must ignore the higher reaches of the intelligence, he must take no share in the newer gospels, he must shut out the future and accept the present. What we call the ideal is in fact a dim prophetic picture of the future. When the future comes it will not be exactly like any man's ideal. Yet at present the ideal is the nearest approach we can make towards picturing the future. It looms up from the mist with uncertain outlines as the goal for our attainment, and the wisest cannot determine if it be a mirage or no. The realist wants firmer and more tangible truth: he finds it in the present, in the world of custom around us.

While the idealist is busy with the transcendental, the uncommon, the mysterious, the fan-



tastic, the exceptional in nature (knowing that by her exceptions nature proves her rules), with morbid anatomy, with psychological problems, with the higher emotions and passions, with shapes of supernal beauty that represent to his fancy what humanity ought to be, and with heroic and romantic actions that represent what it ought to do, the realist prefers to deal with man and nature in their wonted moods, to take humanity as it *is*, to describe what it *does*. He accepts the conventions, proprieties, manners of the present as something fixed and absolute. Words harden into things for him. He scouts at the notion that great men should be a law to themselves, forgetting that it is because great men of old did break through the conventions and traditions of their time that we have any religion, any code of morals at all. He accepts the results of great thinking in the past, but only when they have become part of the mental equipment of all educated men, when custom has sanctioned them. Macaulay sees in the orphic sayings of Kant, Carlyle, and Emerson a deliberate attempt at being unintelligible. Howells, who comes later, accepts Carlyle and Emerson, but rejects Browning.

It may at first sight seem odd to rank Macaulay among the realists. Yet the realists of



to-day are the legitimate posterity of Macaulay and Thackeray. Howells, indeed, has claimed descent from George Eliot and Hawthorne, but George Eliot is one of those rare spirits who refuse to be classified and from whom realist and idealist alike may learn. Hawthorne is as distinctly an idealist as Tennyson; to the modern Americans he has imparted only certain graces of style. Thackeray has defined his own mental position in *Pendennis*, who had reached "a belief qualified with scorn in all things extant:" (cf. Emerson, who in his own pithy way sums up Thackeray's philosophy thus: "We must renounce ideals and accept London.") Macaulay's hospitality towards things extant has no dash of scorn. His attitude is that of the comfortable British Philistine accepting current faiths, current traditions, without inquiring into their basis. The better fashion of the moment represents abstract truth to him. He has no court of appeal at which to reverse the judgments of the past. There is something very characteristic in his favorite trick of comparing with each other the famous men of literature or history and according to each his precise share of glory, as if the sliding scale of his own time were unalterable. And as in this way he husbanded the energy that might have been utilized in examining into

premises, he could devote all his powers to expounding and (in the better sense) vulgarizing conclusions.

And this is the mission of the realist. He suppresses that soul within him that would soar into the high ancestral spaces, he develops that soul which

With tenacious organs holds in love  
And clinging lust the world in its embraces.

It is the latter soul Howells has cultivated most assiduously, withdrawing from and repelling that other soul which found expression in many of his youthful poems, played fitfully about "A Foregone Conclusion," and flared up for a moment, just before its final extinction, in "The Undiscovered Country." *His* hate, too, is the measure of his love. He distrusts the ideal as heartily as the idealist distrusts the real. The author of "The Pilot's Story" is found in his maturer age speaking in these terms of poetry: "There are black moments when, honestly between ourselves and the reader, the spectacle of any mature lady or gentleman proposing to put his or her thoughts and feelings into rhymes affects us much as the sight of some respected person might if we met him jiggling or caracoling down the street instead of mod-

estly walking." To be sure, one must not take this jesting too seriously. Yet it seems the sort of jest that conceals the sincere word. And at all events it aptly illustrates the prevailing mood of the realist, the impulse to look upon his fellows from the stand-point of clothes and manners. Paterfamilias, honest, respectable, humdrum,—that is the true man to the realist. Paterfamilias's proper speech is prose, just as his proper movement is a walk. Ah, yes! but beneath the conventional man in the tailor-made clothes there is something which at times will out, and in rhythmic words, in rhythmic movements, he somehow seems to express a higher and truer and even a more real self. Society is but a thin crust of custom laid over volcanic passions. "O Heaven!" says Teufelsdröckh, "it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future Ghost within him; but are, in very deed, Ghosts! These Limbs, whence had we them; this stormy Force; this life-blood with its burning Passion? They are dust and shadow; a Shadow-system gathered round our ME; wherein, through some moments or years, the Divine Essence is to be revealed in the Flesh." So speaks the idealist. *He* looks at man from within,—the realist, from without. The shadow-system is Howells's concern. Paterfamilias, with his whiskers, his clothes, his

prayer-book, and his small talk, represents the real man to him, not the awful Divine Essence beneath the simulacrum, which but for the accident of birth, the specious phenomena of time and space, might have taken on some totally different simulacrum, might have been clothed in the flesh of Mussulman, Hindoo, or Cannibal, and still been the same ME.

The realist is, in fact, another symptom of the prevailing agnosticism. He, too, aims to confine himself within the limits of the knowable. Paterfamilias may be a simulacrum, yet it is *his* features that the photographing sun binds upon cunningly-prepared paper, *his* traits that we most readily discuss and define in the arbitrary collocation of sounds which we call language. Paterfamilias, the photograph, language,—these things our senses testify to, and the agnostic accepts no other testimony. Here, to be sure, is a measure of truth. Yet, after all, these things,—will they be to-morrow as they are to-day? Will language and the photograph report the same Paterfamilias? nay, will it be the same language and the same photograph? Let us trust that all will have developed into higher things, that as progress has been the law of the past it will be the law of the future. Idealism is an effort towards the

future,—it is the salient energy ; realism, as Emerson says of conservatism, the pause on the last movement.

Yet the pause, too, is right. We must take breath, we must allow our fellows to catch up with us. Progress means not the progress of the individual, but of the race. Differentiation is a temporary expedient ; the aim of nature is solidarity. To borrow two ugly words from Herbert Spencer, we proceed from a crass homogeneity, through heterogeneity, to a fully-developed homogeneity. Man, who began in lawless democracy, could only through the successive stages of oligarchies, despotisms, monarchies, reach the highly-organized democracy whose promise we see to-day.

God is a democrat ; he loves the child of the idea no better than he does the Philistine. The realist's love for the Philistine places him, by so much, nearer to God. Moses by wrath and haughtiness forfeited to Joshua the privilege of leading the people into the promised land. The realist is the modern Joshua. He estimates himself more humbly than the idealist. His own preferences are less likely to represent general principles to him. If he does not like cakes and ale, he at least has no scorn for his

brother who does. "Ah! poor Real Life which I love," cries Howells, in his earliest novel "Their Wedding Journey," "can I make others share the delight I find in thy foolish and insipid face?" Howell's dislike of the ideal largely arises from its intellectual phariseeism, its uncharitableness to common folk, its glorification of genius into an aristocracy that can do no wrong. "We do not despair," says the Editor's Study, "of the day when the poor honest herd of humankind shall give universal utterance to the universal instinct, and shall hold selfish power in politics, in art, in religion, for the devil that it is; when neither its crazy pride nor its amusing vanity shall be flattered by the puissance of the 'geniuses' who have forgotten their duty to the common weakness and have abused it to their own glory. In that day we shall shudder at many monsters of passion, of self-indulgence, of heartlessness, whom we still more or less openly adore for their 'genius,' and shall account no man worshipful whom we do not feel and know to be good."

Elsewhere the Study rejoices that "the penetrating spirit of democracy has found its expression in the very quality of literature; the old oligarchic republic of letters is passing;

already we have glimpses of the Commune." And still again the owner of the Study exhorts us to consider the view of a correspondent who looked upon novel-reading as an amusement, like horse-racing or card-playing, for which he had no time when he entered upon the serious business of life, and "not to dismiss it with high literary scorn as that of some Bœotian dull to the beauty of art,"—which indeed is the lordly manner of the Idealist. "Refuse it as we may, it is still the feeling of the vast majority of people for whom life is earnest, and who find only a distorted and misleading likeness of it in our books. We may fold ourselves in our gowns and close the doors of our studies, and affect to despise this rude voice; but we cannot shut it out." To Matthew Arnold, for example, the voices of the vast majority are as sounding brass, only the remnant are worth considering.

East and West are contraries, yet in order to go north the ship must tack first to the east and then to the west. The East cries, "Lo, here is the way!" and the West, "Lo, here is the way!" but the mariner knows that he cannot give implicit credence to either, though he must yield a half-faith to both. And as he follows the north star by sailing first to the east and

then to the west, so man travels his appointed path, through continuous action and reaction,—from radicalism to conservatism, from idealism to realism,—with the net result of keeping on the straight line of truth.





## IS POETRY DECLINING?

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THERE never was a period in our literature in which so many volumes of poetry were placed upon the market. There never was a period when current poetry was so little read. And there never was a period when the current poetry so little deserved to be read. Walt Whitman and Lowell, Browning and Tennyson, are still living, indeed, but they belong to the mightier past. The younger singers are many of them pleasing enough, they can charm or soothe;—they give you nothing to think of. A number have attained to an almost flawless perfection of form. It is a pity they have nothing to say,—they say it so admirably. Fifty years ago such beauty of expression would have been the gift only of the favored few who had a message to deliver. To-day the most difficult metres seem to lie within the reach of many sensitive and artistic minds. These minor singers all resemble one another; they differ from the minor singers of any other generation; through all their melodies the unmistakable note of the end of the nineteenth

century can be heard: yet they suggest no obvious models. The paradox is explainable by the fact that the poems are a result of impartial study of all the models, and they bear, therefore, the same relation to these models that composite photographs—by which several men of striking individuality are reduced to a common and often commonplace type—bear to their originals.

Is this one of the signs of poetical decadence, this universal accomplishment of verse? What every one can do no one will care to do. There are other signs which point if not to a decadence at least to an interregnum of poetry. Chief among these is the popular apathy to this form of literature. No one buys poetry nowadays,—a fact which may be brought home with startling insistence to the authors of all these pretty little fledglings of verse when their publishers' half-yearly statements come in. A novel which sells less than a thousand copies is a hopeless failure, a book of poems which sells more than a hundred scores a notable success. In a world where there is so much hewing of wood and drawing of water to be done, one cannot help asking whether it is worth while to spend laborious days upon trifles which at best will give a passing pleasure to the palates of a few

literary epieures; and the very fact that we do apply such utilitarian tests shows that our reverence for poetry is on the wane. "There is a disposition in many persons just now," says Dr. Holmes, "to deny the poet his benefit of clergy, and to hold him no better than other people." We are apt to despise the cant which was once so popular and which represented the "marts of trade" as being very well for the vulgar but degrading to the higher intelligence. We are beginning to see something admirable in the intellect which brings vast commercial transactions to a successful issue or spans a continent with a railroad. Mr. Stedman is not often behind the age, but most readers would quarrel with him when he praises Poe for that "he never resorted to any mercantile employment for a livelihood," and adds that "there is something chivalrous in the attitude of one who never earned a dollar except by his pen." In the days of Byron it was thought chivalrous to refuse to earn a dollar by your pen, but the literary guild has long outgrown that affectation.

Another sign that seems to indicate the possible decay of poetry is the fact that among the few readers still left a majority are women. Now, women are the conservative element in

society,—the element which holds fast to what has been proven to be good until after the advance guard has decided that it has lost its virtue. In the advance guard itself, which of course we take to be the masculine contingent, some of the foremost spirits have given up their loyalty to poetry. Carlyle, for instance, openly denounced it as a semi-barbarous form of ornamenting thought, much like the ring in the nose of the savage, which must inevitably be abandoned in the onward march of intellect; Thackeray cannot hide a disposition to associate its practice with long hair and effeminate ways; Bulwer predicted that as poetry was the first-born of the arts it would be the first to die, and Howells's opinions have been already quoted.

Ay, so we think in our coarser moments. But it is the brain and not the heart that speaks :

Just when we are safest, there's a sunset touch,  
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,  
A chorus-ending from Euripides,  
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears,  
As old and new at once as nature's self,  
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,  
Take hands and dance there, a fantastie ring,  
Round the ancient idol, on his base again.

Browning's lines are applied to Religion. But Poetry, like Religion, can never die out

of the hearts of men, however its forms may change, however doubt and unbelief may obscure it for a moment in the transition stage from one form to another. This is the Ragnarok,—the twilight of gods and poets alike. The twilight may give way to the blackness of night; but in the deepest blackness, as the proverb tells us, lies the strongest promise of a new dawn. And so long as Browning and Tennyson and our own great singers are alive we who live in the twilight may thank God that the splendors of the sunset are still aglow in the heavens.



## WHO WAS MOTHER GOOSE?

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THE answers to this question, thrown boldly together without explanation, would seem astonishingly numerous and self-contradictory. For if the mathematical axiom holds good that two things which are equal to a third thing are equal to each other, then Mother Goose is no less varied a personality than the goddesses Freia, Frigga, Isis, and Venus, the fairies Bertha and Hulda, Queen Bertha, of France, the German White Lady, the Italian Befana, the Russian Baboushka, and (with all due reverence) the Virgin Mary. That is to say, Mother Goose is simply a popular reminiscence of the old Norse goddess Freia, who is identical with, or has been merged into, all the other characters.

It is true that another far less illustrious origin has been suggested. A common story makes her merely one Elizabeth Goose, a Boston matron, and places the date of her birth at not more than two hundred years ago.

Let us examine this story first, and see what

portion of truth it contains. In the record of marriages in the City Registrar's office in Boston may be found this entry :

Thomas Fleet,  
Eliz'th Goose.  
Rev. Dr. Cotton Mather Presbyn.  
June 8, 1715.

Now, Elizabeth Goose was the daughter of a lady, *née* Elizabeth Foster, who had married, July 5, 1692, into a famous colonial family whose original name of Vertigoose, after going through the transition stage of Vergoose, emerged finally as Goose. Thomas Fleet was an Englishman who had emigrated to Boston in 1712, and started a printing-house in Pudding Lane. So much is fact, not legend. In 1719, it is said, there appeared from his printing-press a book with the following title: "Songs for the Nursery, or Mother Goose's Melodies for Children. Printed by T. Fleet, at his printing-house, Pudding Lane, 1719. Price, two coppers." A rude drawing of a goose with a very long neck and wide-open mouth adorned the title-page. Here we begin to tread on dubious ground. No copy of this book is now known to be in existence. Bibliomaniacs have explored every clew and failed to find it. The authority for the circumstantial description

of the title-page is given as follows in G. A. R.'s edition of "Mother Goose," Boston, 1869: "About the year 1856, a gentleman of Boston, a member of the Massachusetts Historical Society, while examining a file of old newspapers in the library of the American Antiquarian Society at Worcester, came across a dilapidated copy of the original edition of 'Mother Goose's Melodies.' Not more than twelve or fifteen pages were left, but, as the price was only two coppers, it is not probable that there were many more. Being in search of other matter, he merely took note of the title and general condition and character of the work, intending to make a further examination of it at another time. Whether he ever did so is not known. His health being impaired, he soon after went to Europe, where he remained for many months." G. A. R. goes on to say that he became acquainted with these and other facts after the gentleman's death in 1859, and made a protracted search for the book, or for any notice of it in the newspapers of the time, but without success. He insists, however, "of the fact that the gentleman referred to discovered an imperfect copy of the veritable *editio princeps* there can be no doubt." Well, evidence of this sort is absolutely valueless and would be ruled out of any court of law. It is not quite certain that



Fleet was in Pudding Lane in 1719. Either in 1713 or 1731 (the former date is favored by Windsor's "Memorial History of Boston") he removed his business to Cornhill. According to an ancient account-book preserved in the New England Historic and Genealogical Society, Daniel Henchman, a colonial bookseller, published in 1719 a volume of "Verses for Children," which may have been the book attributed to Fleet.

We now descend into the realm of pure legend. It is asserted that on the birth of Fleet's son and heir, old Mrs. Goose, in ecstasy over the event, spent all her spare time in the nursery or in wandering about the house, singing the songs and ditties which she had learned in her younger days. Thomas Fleet, being something of a humorist as well as a shrewd business man, conceived the idea of punishing her—for she had become the annoyance not only of his own household, but of all the neighborhood—by collecting these songs, with such as he could gather from other sources, into a book which bore her name on the title. A pretty story enough, and not impossibly a true one, but it has no evidence to support it.

If the story be true, it is simply a curious

coincidence that just twenty-two years before (in 1697) Charles Perrault had made his famous collection of fairy-tales under the title of "Contes de ma Mère l'Oye;" or, "Tales of Mother Goose." The term is known to have been in use in the sense of folk-tale nearly a hundred years before Perrault published his book. Rabelais and other writers also use it as typical of a popular story "Conte de la Cigogne." Oudin, in his "Curiosités Françaises," 1649, speaks of "Contes de Peau d'Asnon, Contes au vieux Loup, ou Contes de ma Commère l'Oye." Andrew Lang suggests that Mother Goose is only one of many animal patrons of story, while E. Martinengo-Cesaresco holds that "La Mère l'Oye" and "La Cigogne," like "Peau d'Ane," were simply folk-tales, which were once so popular as to become representative. But she admits it is very strange that all trace of them, except their names, should be lost.

The elder mythologists trace Mother Goose to *la Reine Pédaque* (the Goose-foot Queen), and though Mr. Lang rather slights this theory, it is the most plausible that has yet been advanced. *La Reine Pédaque*, also known as Bertha the Spinner, *la fileuse*, and Bertha with the large foot, *Berthe au grand pied*, figures, in effigy, on the façade of many old French churches,

as a crowned female with a swan's or a goose's foot, holding a distaff in her hand. There were two Berthas, queens of France, who have merged into each other in the popular mind. The later and more historical was the wife of King Robert II. of France, whom she married A.D. 995. Being his fourth cousin, the marriage was annulled by the church, and when the couple refused to submit they were excommunicated. The legend runs that she gave birth to a goose as the sign of divine wrath, and the prominent position of *La Reine Pédauque* on old churches is ascribed to a desire to enforce the moral of her punishment. But in fact many of the statues existed before the time of the second Bertha, and represent the more mythical Bertha, mother of Charlemagne, who figures largely in romance and tradition as Bertha with the large foot. The identity of names has caused the two French Berthas to merge together, while the French Bertha with its double personality and the German Bertha have through the same similarity merged together in the minds of the French people, with the result that the various characteristics of these three persons, so merged together, may have formed the popular conception of *Ma Mère l'Oye*.

The French Bertha was swan-footed, or

goose-footed, she held a distaff in her hand, and was fond of spinning. Many French and Italian folk-tales begin "in the time when Queen Bertha spun." In many early chap-books *La Mère Oye* is represented as using a distaff, and as surrounded with a group of children, whom she holds entranced by her stories. The German Bertha is usually represented as a beneficent fairy, who has swan's feet, is the patron of spinners, and is attended by a suite of elves, called Heimchen. In some parts of Germany she is an impersonation of the Epiphany, or Twelfth-night, corresponding with the Italian *Befana* and the Russian *Baboushka*; she has an immense foot and a long iron nose, and she visits the household on Twelfth-night, looking after the industry of the maidens at the spinning-wheel. In some parts of Germany Twelfth-night is called Berchentag, or Bertha's day, and the viands once sacred to the Goddess Freia are eaten then.

For in fact Bertha is no less a person than the Goddess Freia herself. And who was Freia?

Freia, Freja, Frúa, Frca, Frigga, Frikka or Frikk (from the Gothic *frijon*, to love) was the Teutonic Aphrodite, or goddess of love. Among her other names was Hulda or Holle (from the

Gothic *holthen*, to help) and Bertha or Perchtha (from the Gothic *peracta*, shining), and the separate personifications of her various names and attributes in different localities resulted in the creation of at least four distinct goddesses or fairies (Freja, Frigga, Hulda, and Bertha) who, in spite of the conflicting legends that have clustered around them, preserve a congenital likeness.

Freia, in the final form of the Norse legend, became the representative of sexual love, as Frigga was of motherly love. Being abandoned by her husband Odin, or Odour, she has ever sought vainly for him and wept tears of gold. She was the most beautiful of all the goddesses, with long, thick golden hair, and was clad in a white garment which spread a rosy refulgence. Her voice was of enthralling sweetness. She loved flowers, rose-bushes, and willow-trees. She lived in a garden, divided by limpid waters from the outer world, wherein was the Fountain of Youth,—the *Jungbrunnen* or *Quick-born*, where the sources of life were renovated, while all around played the souls of the unborn. She rode in a chariot drawn by two cats. She was not only the goddess of love but also of housewifely accomplishments, and about Twelfth-night, the winter solstice, when

the German tribes celebrated one of their sun-worship rites, she visited mortal households and noted the industry of maidens at their spinning.

In Germany the distinction between Freia and Frigga was not so accurately outlined, and under either name the goddess combined the characteristics of Juno and of Venus, the motherly and the erotic element. After the advent of Christianity she was freely confounded, on the one hand with Venus, being made emblematic of sinful lust, and on the other with the Virgin Mary. The Venus who seduced Tannhäuser lived in the Hörselberg, an old place of Freia worship. The rose, the favorite flower of Freia, was converted into a symbol of the Madonna. The *kindleinsbrunnen* of mediæval Germany, which were under the protection of the Virgin Mother, and to which married women made pilgrimages in the hope of being blessed with children, were confused reminiscences of Freia's fountain of life. And in many of the German children's rhymes and legends the Mother of God appears with the heathen paraphernalia of Freia still clinging about her. Freia's day, or Friday, was originally the favorite marriage-day, but the early German Christians were wont to look upon it as an unlucky day.

Thus it may be supposed that the Reine Pédauque, trailing clouds of glory after her through her descent from Freia, gradually became identified with the entire cycle of nursery or folk tales as a sort of eidolon or patron saint, and took final shape in popular imagination as *Ma Mère l'Oye*. It is worthy of remark that in the Egyptian system of hieroglyphics the goose stands for son or daughter, and Horapollo explains that it was chosen on account of its fondness for its progeny. Isis, too, the Egyptian Venus, had a goose as her emblem.

Another fact may be noted. In Germany, when it snows it is frequently said, in some districts that Frau Holle, in others that Frau Bertha, has spread and shaken her mantle. The Philistine remembers, as a child in Italy, being perplexed between the contradictory statements of his English governess who said that Mother Goose was plucking the feathers out of her bed, and his Italian nurse who informed him that the Befana was at work on a similar domestic occupation. A knowledge of comparative folk-lore at that early age might have saved him from some despairing doubts as to the value of human testimony.

But whence comes the idea of the goose's

foot? In her earliest form Freia-Hulda-Bertha was figured as a storm-goddess, surrounded by minor cloud-goddesses; in some myths they are conceived as swans on mares. Freia came in this way to be regarded as a Walkyrian Swan-Virgin, or even as an actual swan. Later, as the nature-myth changed, it was humanized, the foot only retained its swan-form, and a further deterioration substituted the goose-foot.





## THE SENSE OF PRE-EXISTENCE.

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Oft o'er my brain does that strange fancy roll  
Which makes the present (while the flush doth last)  
Seem a mere semblance of some unknown past,  
Mixed with such feelings as perplex the soul,  
Self-questioned in her sleep; and some have said  
We lived ere yet this yoke of flesh we wore.

*Coleridge.*

THE fancy which Coleridge describes is one that is familiar to every one. "We have all," says Dickens in "David Copperfield," "some experience of a feeling which comes over us occasionally of what we are saying and doing having been said or done before in a remote time,—of our having been surrounded dim ages ago by the same faces, objects, and circumstances,—of our knowing perfectly well what will be said next, as if we suddenly remembered it." Many other novelists and poets have made literary use of this familiar experience. George Eliot's marvellous little story, "The Lifted Veil," is based upon it; so are Whittier's "A Mystery," and Rossetti's "Sudden Light." Tennyson makes it the subject of one of his early sonnets, which is not too long to quote:

As when with downcast eyes we muse and brood,  
 And ebb into a former life, or seem  
 To lapse far back in a confused dream  
 To states of mystical similitude ;  
 If one but speaks, or hems, or stirs his chair,  
 Ever the wonder waxeth more and more,  
 So that we say, " All this hath been before,  
 All this *hath* been, I know not when or where :"  
 So, friend, when first I looked upon your face,  
 Our thought gave answer, each to each so true,  
 Opposèd mirrors, each reflecting each,—  
 Although I knew not in what time or place,  
 Methought that I had often met with you,  
 And each had lived in the other's mind and speech.

He returned to the subject several years later  
 in " The Two Voices " :

Moreover, something is or seems  
 That touches me with mystic gleams  
 Like glimpses of forgotten dreams—

Of something felt like something here ;  
 Of something done I know not where ;  
 Such as no language may declare.

Bulwer, in many of his works, has allusions  
 to this feeling of reminiscence, which, he tells  
 us, " Platonists would resolve to be the un-  
 quenchable and struggling consciousness of a  
 former life." He wonders, strangely enough,  
 that the idea of the soul's pre-existence has not  
 been made available for the purposes of poetry,  
 forgetting that it forms the key-note of the finest  
 ode in our language, Wordsworth's " Intima-

tions of Immortality from Recollections of Childhood”:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :  
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar ;  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home :  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy !  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing boy.  
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy ;  
The youth, who daily farther from the east  
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,  
And by the vision splendid,  
Is on the way attended ;  
At length the man perceives it die away  
And fade into the light of common day.

And does not Milton, who had imbibed a love of the Platonic philosophy from his college friend, Henry More, hint at something similar in those noble lines from “*Comus*”?

The soul grows clotted by contagion,  
Imbodies and imbrutes, till she quite lose  
The divine property of her first being.  
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,  
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres,  
Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,  
As loath to leave the body that it loved.

Plato's argument was that the knowledge which we seem to acquire for the first time is really a recollection of what the soul knew before its submersion in matter and its assumption of the human form,—precisely the argument of Wordsworth and Milton. By the Platonic philosophy the sense of pre-existence is readily explainable, and still more so by the Pythagorean and the Buddhist, which teach the doctrine of transmigration. Pythagoras professed to have a distinct recollection of his former self in the respective persons of a herald named *Æthalides*, of *Euphorbius* the Trojan, of *Hermotimus* of *Clazomenæ*, etc., and he even pointed out, in the temple of Juno at Argos, the shield he had used in attacking *Patroclus*. The Buddhists claim that the soul has already passed through many previous conditions and will pass through many more ere it attain the blissful *Nirvana*, or absorption into the Infinite. Many of the Hellenic philosophers, who were not absolutely committed to Pythagoras, held that the endless repetition of the same mode of existence, though at vast intervals of time, is an absolute necessity. There are only a certain number of things in the universe, hence there can only be a certain number of combinations, and when these are exhausted, the same course must begin over again. (It will be remembered that by a simi-

lar train of reasoning John Stuart Mill made himself miserable by forecasting the final extinction of original music.) On any one of these theories the apparent recollection of what is passing around may be no delusion, but a genuine, though abnormal, exercise of the memory.

But there is a quite different form of pre-existence which is recognized by modern science. Our instincts, we are told, are all survivals from our ancestors, they register the accumulated and inherited experience of past generations. Our delight in wild scenery, for example, is explained by Tyndale as due to the "combination of states that were organized in the race during barbarous times, when its pleasurable activities were among the mountains, woods, and waters." If our feelings are reminiscences of the feelings of our forefathers, if we live over again their emotions, why may we not, when the mind is abnormally active and introspective, live over again some actual circumstance in one of our ancestor's lives, or reproduce the scene through which he passed?

Here is a little poem by Frederick Petersen in which some such fancy as this is given poetical shape :

## HEREDITY.

I meet upon the woodland ways  
At morn a lady fair :  
Adown her slender shoulders strays  
Her raven hair ;

And none who looks into her eyes  
Can fail to feel and know  
That in this conscious clay there lies  
Some soul aglow.

But I, who meet her oft about  
The woods in morning song,  
I see behind her far stretch out  
A ghostly throng,—

A priest, a prince, a lord, a maid,  
Faces of grief and sin,  
A high-born lady and a jade,  
A harlequin,—

Two lines of ghosts in masquerade,  
Who push her where they will,  
As if it were the wind that swayed  
A daffodil.

She sings, she weeps, she smiles, she sighs,  
Looks cruel, sweet, or base ;  
The features of her fathers rise  
And haunt her face.

As if it were the wind that swayed  
Some stately daffodil,  
Upon her face they masquerade  
And work their will.

Perhaps, after all, if history is ever to be verified, that verification may be found in our own minds. It has always been a favorite speculation of poets and metaphysicians that man is a microcosm, containing within himself the history of the race and of the universe, if only we had wit to read it.

De Quincey compared the human brain to a palimpsest. Now, a palimpsest (the word means "twice rubbed") is a roll of parchment cleansed of its manuscript in order to make room for new manuscript. The rude chemistry of the ancients could efface the old sufficiently to leave a field for the new, yet not sufficiently to make the traces of the elder manuscript irrecoverable for us. Palimpsests have been found that yielded many successive layers of manuscript. The traces of each handwriting, regularly effaced, have in the inverse order been regularly called back by the magic of modern chemistry, and as the chorus of the Athenian stage unwove through the antistrophe every step that had been mystically woven through the strophe, so, by our modern conjurations of science, secrets of ages remote from each other have been exorcised from the accumulated shadows of centuries.

"What else than a natural and mighty

palimpsest," continues De Quincey, "is the human brain? Such a palimpsest is my brain; such a palimpsest, oh, reader! is yours. Everlasting layers of ideas, images, feelings, have fallen upon your brain softly as light. Each succession has seemed to bury all that went before. And yet, in reality, not one has been extinguished." The comparison is apt and fine. Every one has experienced the strange tricks that memory occasionally plays. You are engaged in reading, in writing, in serious occupation which engrosses your mental powers. Suddenly there bursts into your thoughts some recollection of childhood, some trivial circumstance that happened years ago and was forgotten immediately afterwards. Not the minutest analogy need exist between your present thoughts and the unbidden recollection that starts, goblin-like, from the sealed-up vaults of the past. Does this not indicate that every experience in life, no matter how frivolous, leaves an indelible print on the mental organism, and that, though this print may seem to fade, it is still there, like writing in invisible ink, or the effaced manuscript on the palimpsest,—only waiting for some exciting cause to bring it out clearly and legibly?

This truth is enforced by the experiences of



persons who have been on the threshold of death. Those who have been recovered from drowning or hanging say that previous to the advent of unconsciousness they have seen a sort of panorama of their whole previous existence, with not the smallest incident, thought, or feeling omitted ; and it is thence inferred that all human beings at the moment of dissolution experience this awful resurrection of the dead past. Again, it is well known that very aged persons are used to throw back and concentrate the light of their memory upon scenes of early childhood, recalling many things which had faded even to themselves in middle life, whilst they often forget altogether the whole intermediate stages of their existence. "This shows," says De Quincey, "that naturally, and without violent agencies, the human brain is by tendency a palimpsest." But our brains are inherited from our ancestors. Why, then, may it not be that the human brain is a palimpsest, containing more or less faded, yet recoverable records, not only of our entire past life, but of the lives of our ancestors to the remotest periods ?

Coleridge, in his boyhood, one day was proceeding through the Strand, stretching out his arms as if swimming, when a passer-by, feeling a hand at his coat-tail, turned rudely round

and seized him as a pickpocket. Coleridge denied the charge, and confessed that he had forgotten his whereabouts in the impression that he was Leander swimming across the Hellespont,—a wretched street-lamp being transformed by his imagination into the signal-light of the beautiful priestess of Sestos.

Now, it would be a little too fanciful to suggest that Coleridge may have numbered Leander among his ancestors, and that Leander's memory was suddenly in an abnormal moment reasserting itself through the brain of Coleridge. It would be too fanciful, and, besides, Leander may never have existed. But here are some interesting personal experiences which come to us from an English source, and which are susceptible of this same fanciful explanation.

#### AN ENGLISHMAN'S EXPERIENCE.

“Everybody that observes cannot fail to have noticed that long contemplation of any object completely alters its appearance. The impression it left in time wears out, and is insensibly succeeded by another. That strangeness which at first sight characterizes the object becomes invariably dissipated by familiarity, and, at last, the thing assumes a permanent expression wholly different from what it bore when first

seen. In common with others I have noticed this fact. There is, too, another of similar nature, that I once believed I alone had observed, but which I now find is by no means the case. Tennyson, but in a very limited and partial sense, has noticed it in the following passage:

As when we dwell upon a word we know,  
Repeating till the sound we know so well  
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why.

“Thus the converse operation is performed in the mind. What has been familiarized loses its accustomed appearance, and reverts to that which it originally presented.

“With me, these sensations are of recent growth. At one time I had so great a difficulty in conceiving the past and the absent that, whenever I endeavored, in imagination, to revivify scenes that had previously occurred, or to recall bygone events or the appearance of a person with whom I had been acquainted, the attempt was an utter failure. But now, my conception is too distinct,—my organization is too easily affected,—all my senses conspire against me. A peculiar scent, a note of music, a cloud rolling from off the face of the sun, a motion of my body, even, is often the sole cause in producing a renewal of impressions first re-

ceived years ago, and feelings long since gone and forgotten. And not only in recalling to the memory, with intense truth, my own experiences that have faded away, but also in reproducing scenes in which, by the nature of things, I never could have participated.

“A casual glance at the name of a street is sufficient to call up to my second sight scenes that have been enacted therein, or persons that I know have in some way been connected with it. Thus, it occasionally happens to me that a street with which I am perfectly familiar suddenly loses its accustomed appearance, and assumes that strangeness and newness with which I first beheld it. For a moment or two it retains this aspect. Then, by degrees, there comes a change, and, instead of reverting to the appearance with which I am most familiar, the street becomes the nucleus of extraordinary phenomena.

“A strange spectacle presents itself. That ever-moving crowd, which to me is solitude, begins, one by one, to disappear; that roaring traffic, which on me produces the same effect as silence elsewhere, begins to subside; my senses become involuntarily inactive; the impressions of surrounding objects fade away. Then another crowd and another kind of noise succeed, and I feel I am in contact with beings that, I

know by some intuition, have long since disappeared beyond the limits of temporal influence. At first, all is a bewildering confusion ; the figures that flit to and fro possess an indistinctness of outline not unlike what is commonly observed in a thick November fog ; nothing is clearly visible. But there soon follow order and distinctness and harmony, and I find myself—*spectator, haud non particeps*—in the midst of a scene that I feel convinced must in former years have been enacted in that street. After a while, it grows fainter and fainter, and at last, just as the vapor produced by breathing on glass evaporates, completely wears itself out. The forms I see move along just as people of to-day ; they appear to recognize each other, enter into conversation with each other, and have all the characteristics of real beings.

“ As for myself, I do not speak,—I cannot speak ; I am among them, but not of them ; I am not perceived, but I perceive these forms as plainly as I perceive this paper on which I am writing, and with such distinctness as to enable me long afterwards to recall to my mind their gait, their lineaments, the expression of their countenances, the very texture of their skin ; I am, moreover, enabled by some internal but unmistakable assurance to recognize individuals and identify events. Thus—to omit

lesser incidents—I have found myself at Westminster in the crowd that thronged the approaches to the Abbey at the coronation of Henry VII.; I have seen Shakespeare (‘of the Globe’ in more senses than one) hurrying along to his theatre in Bankside; I have been jostled by the mob that attended the execution of Charles I.; in Russell Street, at Covent Garden, I have stood and watched ‘the Wits’ as they came out from Wills’s or Button’s. To come to a later period, I have, in Holborn, been passed by that wonderful boy who left Bristol and came to live and starve and die in London; and, in the same thoroughfare, have, for some short distance, followed the Viscount Chateaubriand with dishevelled hair and bloodshot eye—dragging himself along, devoured of hunger, deserted of sleep—come abroad that none might know his destitution.

“Nor, at the time of their occurrence, does it appear at all strange to me that I should see these sights. I am sensible of no surprise at their coming, and, as in a dream persons never question the reality of the apparitions that present themselves, so in presence of these phantom-scenes of mine I am firmly convinced of their reality. I am, however, fully aware they are not real existences, in the ordinary sense of the term; but I feel them to be true

pictures of actual persons and occurrences. Whenever the spectacle is generated I cannot evade it; it is not in my power to dissipate it; the scene must wear itself out. My attention is completely absorbed by the spectacle, and I am bound to be a silent spectator of what is going on. Once—and once only—was I conscious of exerting force to free myself from the inthralment. I was walking through an unobserving train of these phantoms, when suddenly a bell in some neighboring church struck out. On all occasions, if a sound from the outer world is heard by me, the spell is at once broken and I am released. But on this, I could clearly hear the bell, and yet it was as if I were altogether out of the world whence it came. I was alarmed at the idea of participating in two distinct existences. Terror came on me as in a nightmare. A thought struck me that I was henceforth to live in visions. I struggled with all my might to free myself. All my attempts were in vain; every effort served only to weaken my power of resistance; the spectacle maintained itself. At last, and after I had given myself up to its influence, it suddenly and spontaneously disappeared.”

Another explanation, of a less fantastic sort, was first broached in Wigan's “The Duality of



the Mind" (1884). After describing the sudden flash of reminiscence which accompanies the sensation in question, he adds,—

"All seems to be *remembered*, and to be now attracting attention for the second time; never is it supposed to be the *third* time. And this delusion occurs only when the mind has been exhausted by excitement, or is, from indisposition, or any other cause, languid, or only slightly attentive to the conversation. The persuasion of the scene being a repetition comes on when the attention has been *roused* by some accidental circumstance. . . . I believe the explanation to be this: only one brain has been used in the immediately preceding part of the scene; the other brain has been asleep, or in an analogous state nearly approaching it. When the attention of both brains is roused to the topic, there is the same vague consciousness that the ideas have passed through the mind before, which takes place on reperusing the page we had read while thinking on some other subject. The ideas *have* passed through the mind before; and as there was not a sufficient consciousness to fix them in the mind, without a renewal, we have no means of knowing the length of time that had elapsed between the *faint* impression received by the single brain, and the *distinct*



impression by the double brain. It may seem to have been many years."

Dr. Wigan's theory is plausible and ingenious, and has been supported, in part at least, by more recent authorities on brain-phenomena. Perhaps he lays too much stress on the idea that some derangement or indisposition of the mind is commonly a prerequisite to the presence of this condition. Usually the phenomenon occurs in perfect health, and is then soothing and pleasant, indeed, almost delightful. This, however, is where it does not last too long. *Then* it becomes oppressive and may indicate some cerebral disorder. Sir Walter Scott, under date February, 1828, at which time he was harassed by financial difficulties, records in his "Diary" that he was afflicted at dinner-time by a sense of pre-existence so strong as to resemble a mirage or a ealentine; and he adds, "There was a vile sense of want of reality in all I did and said." But he had also experienced the same sensation in vigorous health, for he refers to it in "Guy Mannering;" where Bartram, unconscious of his name and lineage, revisits the scenes of his infancy and explains to himself their strange familiarity on the hypothesis that it resulted from this feeling.

William Hone, the Parodist, and author of the "Every-day Book," has given a personal experience which refuses to be explained on Dr. Wigan's hypothesis. He says that one day he had to make a call in a part of London which was quite unknown to him. He was shown into a room to wait, and, on looking round, remarked to his astonishment that everything appeared perfectly familiar: "I seemed to recognize every object. I said to myself, 'What is this? I was never here before, and yet I have seen all this; and, if so, there is a very peculiar knot in the shutter.'" He turned back the shutter and found the knot! "Now, then," thought he, "here is something I cannot account for on my principles [he had been a materialist]; there must be some power beyond matter." The thought then suggested never left him till he was brought out from "the horror of great darkness," the atheism of which he ever after spoke with shuddering memories. The fact that Hone proposed to himself as a test of the reality of his impression, the finding of a certain knot in the wood of a window-shutter which he never before could have seen, and that he actually did discover it, is not explicable on Dr. Wigan's hypothesis.

The subject is an interesting one, and it seems

worth while to collect together a few personal experiences, in spite of the fact that they have already appeared in print. Dr. Wigan gives this as his own experience:

DR. WIGAN'S EXPERIENCE.

"The strongest example of this delusion I ever recollect in my own person was at the funeral of the Princess Charlotte. . . . Several disturbed nights previously, and the almost total privation of rest on the night immediately preceding it, had put my mind into a state of hysterical irritability, which was still further increased by grief, and by exhaustion for want of food. . . . I had been standing for four hours, and on taking my place beside the coffin in St. George's Chapel, was only prevented from fainting by the interest of the scene. . . . Suddenly, after the pathetic *Miserere* of Mozart, the music ceased, and there was an absolute silence. The coffin, placed on a kind of altar covered with black cloth, sank down so slowly through the floor, that it was only in measuring its progress by some brilliant object beyond that any motion could be perceived. I had fallen into a sort of torpid reverie, when I was recalled to consciousness by a paroxysm of grief on the part of the bereaved husband, as his eye suddenly caught the coffin sinking into its black

grave formed by the inverted covering of the altar. In an instant I felt not merely an *impression*, but a *conviction*, that I had seen the whole scene before, and had heard the very words addressed to myself by Sir George Naylor. . . . Often did I discuss this matter with my talented friend, the late Dr. Gooch, who always took great interest in subjects occupying the debatable region between physics and metaphysics, but we could never devise an explanation satisfactory to either of us. I cannot but think that the theory of two brains affords a sufficient solution of this otherwise inexplicable phenomenon."

In 1857 a discussion of this question was started in the *English Notes and Queries*, and produced one or two papers that are worth reviving. One correspondent, a clergyman, tells the following story about himself:

#### A CLERGYMAN'S EXPERIENCE.

"About four years ago I suffered severely from derangement of stomach, and upon one occasion, after passing a restless and disturbed night, I came down to breakfast in the morning experiencing a sense of general discomfort and uneasiness. I was seated at the breakfast-table with some members of my family, when sud-

denly the room and objects around me vanished away, and I found myself, without surprise, in the street of a foreign city. Never having been abroad, I imagined it to have been a foreign city from the peculiar character of the architecture. The street was very wide, and on either side of the roadway there was a foot-pavement elevated above the street to a considerable height. The houses had pointed gables and casemented windows overhanging the street. The roadway presented a gentle acclivity, and at the end of the street there was a road crossing it at right angles, backed by a green slope, which rose to the eminence of a hill, and was crowned by more houses, over which soared a lofty tower, either of a church or some other ecclesiastical building. As I gazed on the scene before me I was impressed with an overwhelming conviction that I had looked upon it before, and that its features were perfectly familiar to me ; I even seemed *almost* to remember the name of the place, and whilst I was making an effort to do so a crowd of people appeared to be advancing in an orderly manner up the street. As it came nearer it resolved itself into a quaint procession of persons in what we should call fancy dresses, or perhaps more like one of the guild festivals which we read of as being held in some of the old conti-

mental cities. As the procession came abreast of the spot where I was standing, I mounted on the pavement to let it go by, and as it filed past me, with its banners and gay paraphernalia flashing in the sunlight, the irresistible conviction again came over me that I had seen this same procession before, and in the very street through which it was now passing. Again I *almost* recollected the name of the concourse and its occasion; but whilst endeavoring to stimulate my memory to perform its function, the effort dispelled the vision, and I found myself, as before, seated at my breakfast-table, cup in hand. My exclamation of astonishment attracted the notice of one of the members of my family, who inquired 'what I had been staring at?' Upon my relating what I have imperfectly described, some surprise was manifested, as the vision which appeared to me to embrace a period of considerable duration must have been almost instantaneous. The city, with its landscape, is indelibly fixed in my memory, but the sense of previous familiarity with it has never again been renewed. The 'spirit of man within him' is indeed a mystery, and those who have witnessed the progress of a case of catalepsy cannot but have been impressed with the conviction that there are dormant faculties belonging to the human mind, which, like the rudimentary

wings said to be contained within the skin of a caterpillar, are only to be developed in a higher sphere of being.

“It was long before I could find persons who had experienced what I have so often done in this way. It has many times happened to me, not like the feeling of pre-existence noticed by Lytton and Scott, but as if I had myself gone through precisely the same train of thought before, or as having spoken the same things, and had others join in the conversation and say the same, as had happened at some indistinct period before. I have found a few, but very few, persons who testified that they had experienced the same curious sensation. It never occurred to me as in any way implying or connected with pre-existence, but it is sufficiently strange and unaccountable to have a strong, vivid recollection come upon us that we have thought and spoken, and that others have spoken with us, precisely in the same order and connection as at the time present. This feeling I have had very frequently, but of course it has been oftenest with reference to trains of thought alone. I may add that not unfrequently it has happened to me in a dream, to feel that I had dreamed exactly the same before.”

A very curious parallelism exists between the



above passages and George Eliot's story of "The Lifted Veil." The passages appeared in 1857, George Eliot's story in 1859. The dates *seem* significant.

Another correspondent suggests that, under certain conditions, the human mind is capable of foreseeing the future. "May we not suppose," he continues, "that in dreams or waking reveries we sometimes anticipate what will befall us, and that this impression, forgotten in the interval, is revived by the actual occurrence of the event foreseen?" In the "Confessions" of J. J. Rousseau he points out a remarkable passage to support this theory. Rousseau tells us that in his youth, taking a solitary walk, he fell into a reverie, in which he clearly foresaw "the happiest day of his life," which occurred seven or eight years afterwards: "I saw myself as in an ecstasy, transported to that happy time and to that happy spot, where my heart, possessed of all the gladness it could hold, tasted it with inexpressible rapture without even dreaming of the voluptuousness of the senses. I do not remember ever to have projected myself into the future with more force and illusion, and what struck me most in recalling this reverie when it was realized, was to find everything exactly as I had pictured it. If ever the



dream of a waking man had all the appearance of a prophetic vision, that assuredly was the dream." ("Confessions," Part I. Book 3.) In the sixth book he describes how the day-dream was realized at a fête champêtre in the company of Madame de Warens, at a place which he had not previously seen: "The soul-feeling which I experienced, all we said and did that day, all the things which struck me, recalled to me the sort of day-dream which I had had at Annecy seven or eight years before, and which I have described in its proper place. The correspondence was so exact, that in thinking over the matter, I was moved even to tears."

Now, if Rousseau, on the second of these occasions, had forgotten the previous one, saving a faint remembrance of the ideas he had then conceived, it would simply have appealed to him as the familiar experience which we have called the "sense of pre-existence." Hawthorne, who had too much of the sturdy Anglo-Saxon in his composition to be a self-deceiver, gives a thoroughly characteristic—because common-sense—explanation of a not dissimilar experience in his own case. In the "English Note-Books," after describing a visit to the kitchen of Stanton Harcourt, he says :

## HAWTHORNE'S EXPERIENCE.

“Now—the place being without a parallel in England, and therefore necessarily beyond the experience of an American—it is somewhat remarkable, that while we stood gazing at this kitchen, I was haunted and perplexed by an idea that somewhere or other I had seen just this strange spectacle before. The height, the blackness, the dismal void before my eyes, seemed as familiar as the decorous neatness of my grandmother’s kitchen ; only my unaccountable memory of the scene was lighted up with an image of lurid fires blazing all round the dim interior circuit of the tower. I had never before had so pernicious an attack, as I could not but suppose it, of that odd state of mind wherein we fitfully and teasingly remember some previous scene or incident, of which the one now passing appears to be but the echo and reduplication. Though the explanation of the mystery did not for some time occur to me, I may as well conclude the matter here. In a letter of Pope’s addressed to the Duke of Buckingham, there is an account of Stanton Harcourt (as I now find, although the name is not mentioned), where he resided while translating a part of the ‘Iliad.’ It is one of the most admirable pieces of description in the language

—playful and picturesque, with fine touches of humorous pathos—and conveys as perfect a picture as ever was drawn of a decayed English country-house; and, among other rooms, most of which have since crumbled down and disappeared, he dashes off the grim aspect of this kitchen,—which, moreover, he peoples with witches, engaging Satan himself as head-cook, who stirs the infernal caldrons that seethe and bubble over the fires. This letter and others relative to his abode here were very familiar to my earlier reading, and remaining still fresh at the bottom of my memory, caused the weird and ghostly sensation that came over me on beholding the real spectacle that had formerly been made so vivid to my imagination.”



## THE GENESIS OF "DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE."

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A GREAT deal has been said about the genesis of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," and, as might be expected, continual charges of plagiarism have been exploited in this, that, and the other journal. Mr. Stevenson himself explained to a New York reporter the origin of the story, and has told it with less detail, in one of his essays. Here is the newspaper report:

"On one occasion I was very hard up for money, and I felt that I had to do something. I thought and thought, and tried hard to find a subject to write about. At night I dreamed the story, not precisely as it is written, for of course there are always stupidities in dreams, but practically it came to me as a gift, and what makes it appear more odd is that I am quite in the habit of dreaming stories. Even when fast asleep I know that it is I who am inventing, and when I cry out it is with gratification to know that the story is so good. So soon as I awake, and it always awakens me when I get on a good thing, I set to work and put it together. For instance, all I dreamed about

Dr. Jekyll was that one man was being pressed into a cabinet, when he swallowed a drug and changed into another being. I awoke and said at once that I had found the missing link for which I had been looking so long, and before I went to sleep almost every detail of the story, as it stands, was clear to me. Of course, writing it was another thing."

This is very interesting. Nevertheless, if the story came to Mr. Stevenson not so much as a gift but rather as an inheritance from a long line of former possessors, there is still no flaw in his title. Absolute originality of incident is nowadays out of the question: the few possible germinal conceptions were long ago seized and appropriated by the early masters in fiction. The possible combinations and methods of treatment are infinite, however; and we are right in calling a story original where the ideas are treated and combined in a novel and striking manner. The germinal idea of the story that came to Mr. Stevenson in a dream is that of the double, the *doppelgänger*, an idea which may have originated with the first dream of the first man. When our savage ancestor found that his body could be asleep and quiescent while his soul was abroad, he naturally conceived of an *alter ego*, which through some curious

association of ideas he came in time to confuse with his shadow and his mirrored reflection,—those mysterious *non-egos* which mocked and mimicked his more substantial self. Comparative mythologists are fond of tracing to this germ the popular superstition in ghosts. As man's conscience developed he also grew to recognize the existence of a higher and a lower nature within himself. In the combination of all these ideas "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" became possible to the highly-civilized, artistic thinker of to-day.

But these ideas can be traced back through the successive stages of their evolution in myth and literature. The folk-lore of all nations recognizes the double, frequently refining it into an embodied conscience, which haunts and dogs the sinner, thus differentiating the higher and the lower self of man into separate identities. The Greek woman's appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober is only another variation upon this thought, as are also the Biblical story of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity which turned him into a beast, and the classic legend of men ensnared by the lecherous wiles of Circe and transformed into swine. In folk-lore this germinal idea may be found in all that cycle of stories of which "Beauty and the Beast" is

the type. In literature it has been treated with the most ingenious variety of detail, especially by the writers of the last century or so,—by Fouqué in "*Sintram and his Companions*," by Andersen in "*The Shadow*," by Mrs. Brown-ing in "*The Romaunt of Margret*," by Gautier in "*Le Chevalier double*" and "*La Morte Amoureuse*," by Poe in "*William Wilson*."

The last has been seized upon by most of Stevenson's detractors as the obvious original of "*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*." Yet "*William Wilson*" is itself a very close paraphrase of an old Spanish drama which Byron in a letter to Medwin calls "*El Embozado*." It is extremely unlikely that Poe ever read this drama, but it is wellnigh certain that he did come across the following passage in Byron's letter and did profit by it: "Shelley has been reading a strange drama entitled '*El Embozado*.' It is so scarce that Washington Irving told me he had sought for it without success in several of the public libraries of Spain. The story is that a kind of Cipriano or Faust is through life thwarted in all his plans for the acquisition of wealth, honor, or happiness by a masked stranger, who stands in his way like some Alastor or evil spirit. He is at length in love: the day is fixed for his marriage,

when the unknown contrived to sow dissension between him and his betrothed and to break off the match. Infuriate with his wrongs, he breathes nothing but revenge; but all his endeavors to discover his mysterious foe prove abortive: at length his persecutor appears of his own accord. When about to fight, the Embozado unmasks, and discovers the phantasm of himself, saying, 'Are you satisfied?' The hero dies with horror." This reads almost like an abstract of "William Wilson." Yet we are none the less grateful to Poe for giving us that weird and ominous tale.

In his famous drama of "The Purgatory of St. Patrick" Calderon has a similar episode. Indeed, it seems probable that this is the play which Shelley read, and whose title Byron and Irving misremembered;—a probability strengthened by the fact that El Embozado is one of the characters. Shelley was engaged upon Calderon, had translated parts of the "Magico Prodigioso," and nothing is more likely than that he was attracted by the "Purgatory," which is Calderon's greatest *auto*. But this by the way. In Calderon's drama the third act begins with the conversion of the sinner Enius. He has planned to slay an enemy, but night after night his way is barred



by a mysterious figure muffled in a cloak. At last Enius attacks El Embozado (the muffled or cloaked one), but sees with horror that his sword merely cuts the air. Mustering up his courage, he follows the mysterious stranger's beckoning hand. In a lonely street he demands El Embozado's name. Getting no answer, he flings himself upon the unknown, and tears off the cloak that shrouds him. A skeleton is disclosed. "I, alas! am Enius," says the apparition. "How is it that thou dost not know thine own self?" In the mediæval legend of Oënus, from which Calderon obtained his story, no masked figure follows the hero, but instead there comes to him at every crisis of his fate, falling from space unto his feet, a bit of folded paper on which he finds inscribed his name.

An obvious point of departure between Stevenson's story and all the others we have mentioned is that Mr. Hyde bears no outward resemblance to Dr. Jekyll, but is his exact opposite in appearance,—a repulsive monster in whom are concentrated all the evil qualities of the individual who in the attractive personality of Dr. Jekyll retains merely his own virtues. A hint of this idea had, indeed, found artistic expression in Hawthorne's "Dr. Grimshawe's Secret." In one of the preliminary

studies to this work, found among Hawthorne's papers and appended to the last edition, the author's purpose in the spider which is Grimshaw's famulus is thus set forth: "The great spider shall be an emblem of the doctor himself; it shall be his craft and wickedness coming into this shape outside of him; and his demon; and I think a great deal may be made out of it." Much, indeed, might have been made out of it had the great romancer lived to perfect this book,—as much, perhaps, as his legitimate successor has made out of Mr. Hyde. In its present form the conception is feebly grasped, the moral only dimly indicated. Yet the idea had long been a familiar one with Hawthorne. In an early entry in his "American Note-Books" occurs this suggestion for an intended story: "A man living a wicked life in one place, and simultaneously a virtuous and religious life in another."

But the literary detective has succeeded in finding a still closer parallel. A correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette* called attention to a story in "Hood's Comic Annual" for 1876. (The Hood in question is, of course, the younger and insignificant Hood.) This story is called "The Coarse Captain," and, as analyzed by the *Pall Mall's* correspondent, is as

follows: "A bald-headed, knock-kneed, weak-eyed stock-broker of irreproachable respectability has for his next-door neighbor 'a fat, bottle-nosed, curly-headed, swearing sea-captain,' whom he has never seen, but whose unseemly behavior annoys him very much. I will not go into any details: suffice it to say, it is revealed to Mr. Mullyberry (after several queer complications) that he and the sea-captain are one. In the end, having the choice offered, Mr. Mullyberry decides to terminate his days as the sea-captain,—having, however, on the day before this choice takes effect, paid off (as Mullyberry) the captain's heavy debts and surrendered himself (in that character) to the police as the real perpetrator of a crime with which he has charged the captain. Of course on the next morning the cell is found empty. The captain ultimately reforms. I don't know," continues the correspondent, "whether you will think so, but I myself consider this another interesting case of literary coincidence."

A coincidence probably it is, and nothing more. But, even if Mr. Stevenson had read and remembered the story, "*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*" remains none the less original and astonishing, the moral none the less overpowering.

## POET AND PHILISTINE.

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THE good Longfellow, whose prose is all the wiser perhaps that it never startles, makes the hero of his "Hyperion" confess that it is painful to him to see the scholar and the world assume so often a hostile attitude, and set each other at defiance. He lays the blame partly upon the scholar. "Surely," he says, "it is a characteristic trait of a great and liberal mind, that it recognizes humanity in all its forms and conditions. I am a student;—and always, when I sit alone at night, I recognize the divinity of the student, as she reveals herself to me in the flame of the midnight lamp. But, because solitude and books are not unpleasant to me,—nay, wished for, sought after,—shall I say to my brother, Thou fool! Shall I take the world by the beard, and say, Thou art old, and mad! Shall I look society in the face, and say, Thou art heartless!—Heartless! Beware of that word! The good Jean Paul says very wisely, that 'life in every shape should be precious to us, for the same reason that the Turks carefully

collect every scrap of paper that comes in their way, because the name of God may be written upon it.' Nothing is more true than this, yet nothing more neglected."

From the time of the Hebrew prophets this antipathy has existed between the thinker and the man of affairs. Nor is the hatred only on the side of the thinker. The strong sons of the world are far too apt to despise the more delicate intelligences to whom lucky rhymes are scrip and store. Many a bustling, active business man cannot avoid looking upon artists as a sort of third sex,—as unfrocked women or frocked men. Their performances may be all well enough to amuse women and young people, but they prove nothing, they add nothing to the material prosperity of the world; they encourage indolence and inactivity. "What is the use of Greek?" says Goldsmith's block-head. "I can eat, drink, and sleep without Greek." Well, this is inevitable. We are all narrow-minded. The little circle in which we live represents the world for us. There is a small handful of souls in New York—a good authority has stated that they reach the mystic number of four hundred—who consider themselves the best people in that great metropolis. When all the four hundred are present at a

rout or an assembly, they go home and report that "everybody" was there. In a city of more than a million inhabitants, with thousands of earnest and thoughtful souls whose labors count for something in the progress of the race, with thousands more of honest hard-working men and women, who toil and spin that the four hundred may be clothed in glory, whose handiwork adds to the real wealth of the world, who are producers and not consumers,—these poor creatures look upon themselves as the best people, as the world, as everybody.

We all strive to force upon others as general principles our own individual preferences. The things that we like and the persons that agree with us in liking them are the only likable things and persons, the things we condemn are contemptible, the persons who like them range themselves among the contemptible. Some of us even go so far as to be angry with others for not being angry with the men with whom we are angry. We quote glibly enough the old proverb, *De gustibus non est disputandum*, but we rarely apply it to our neighbor, only to ourselves when we are questioned for liking questionable things. Our meat, we are sure, is meat, and we would shove it down the throats of others to whom it is poison. We feel the

God-given need for harmony, for unison with our fellows, and because people of alien instinct disturb our little private harmony we hate them and dislike them. But every note in the diapason must be struck before the final harmony can be reached. Underlying the apparent chaos of the universe there is a divine unity which in our clearest moments we see only dimly and afar off, and then the majestic dissonances that offend our duller selves acquire a sudden meaning, an infinite splendor and resonance.

The fight between the scholar and the man of affairs ends always in the same manner. The man of affairs has his own way for a time, he rules the world during his life, and after death he is at the mercy of the scholar. It should never be left out of sight that history and biography represent the scholar's view of life. We can only look back upon the past through the medium of books, and books form a more or less colored and distorted medium. They are written by those who have watched, not shared, the fight; and although Matthew Arnold may be right in asserting that these lookers-on best know how the fight has gone, and that

They only live with the world's life  
Who have renounced their own,—

although this may be true enough,—yet none the less a certain literary prejudice and blindness is inevitable while human nature retains its limitations. One should like, for example, to have the story of Saul and Ahab as told by themselves, to know whether those monarchs were as utterly in the wrong as Samuel and Elias and Elijah would have us believe. One should like Nero's own statements instead of Sir Cornwall Lewis's attempts at rehabilitation.

The Storm and Stress period, which culminated in Germany with "*Werther*," in France with "*Réné*" and "*Obermann*," in England with "*Childe Harold*" and "*Adonais*," is the period when the literary hatred for the world reached its apogee, when Genius with a big G received its loudest hosannas of self-glorification. The Geniuses were grand, gloomy, and peculiar; they found the world out of joint, and spent their time in cursing spite that ever they were born to set it right. In fact, they were suffering from the disease which is known as melancholia, hypochondria, or hysteria. Morbid pathologists tell us that its symptoms are a vague unrest and irritability, a fancied superiority to the rest of the race, a feeling that the victim is made of finer clay than his fellows, a love of isolation, an acute sensitiveness to criticism or opposition



as being prompted by hatred and malice. It causes the arrogance which often distinguishes men of genius as well as patients in the incipient stages of insanity. To men of this stamp the world divides itself readily into two classes, the children of light who agree with them, the knaves and clowns who oppose them. Shelley addresses poor Croker as one of the meanest of all God's creatures, because he didn't like Keats's verses. Byron, Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Hugo, Ruskin, and Carlyle have been betrayed into equal energy of scorn, and even at this late period Swinburne's shrieks against those who differ from him are traceable to a similar morbid source.

Perhaps this increased vehemence of the Geniuses was due to a dim perception of the fact that the democracy of the intellect was beginning to assert itself. The stole and the gown, the sceptre and the laurel,—all the Mumbo-jumbo and Medicine-business of the past was losing its hold upon human intelligence. Men learn to disbelieve in all other superiorities before they doubt their own. The good lady of Johnson's acquaintance who was willing to pull princes and nobles down to her own level, but not to raise the servants to her own, is a type of a large class. I am as good as anybody,

means there are few as good as me. When men find that the old conventional claims to recognition are disallowed and disallowable, they waive other aristocracies for the aristocracy of the intellect and the emotions. The Great Soul makes his appearance in literature and in life. And he becomes most vehement and most aggressive at the turning-point when that greatness, too, is beginning to be discredited.

But the truly great-soul is the first to recognize when a superstition has been exploded, when the rights of men are rightfully enlarged. Goethe, who gave the final expression to the German Sturm and Drang period in "Werther," was the first great German to free himself from the influence of that period. In "Tasso" he has entered a plea for worldliness in the character of Antonio, and has pointed out the mutual interdependence of the Philistine and the child of the idea in the final scene where Tasso and Antonio are reconciled.

Tennyson's case is a peculiar one. There is a story that a stranger once calling upon the Laureate was ushered into a dark room. A tall form rose as he entered, and to the stranger's query answered, in melancholy tones, "No, this is not Alfred: this is Samuel, and the gloomiest

of the family." This gloom, this melancholia, this divine despair, is a predominant mood with Tennyson. His intellectual life, however, began at the time when the reaction against Byronic egotism and world-weariness had set in, and his mind was too broad, too far-reaching, not to be in accord with the higher tendencies of his age, and a leader of them. Yet again and again his poems voice the struggle to overcome a natural mood. "The Palace of Art," for instance, in one of his earliest volumes, is a parable, showing how a proud and arrogant soul was converted to the simpler humanities of life and taught to look upon the common run of men with kindness instead of scorn. It is more or less autobiographical, for the same volume contains "The Poet," which teaches the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, with far more earnestness than the love of love. "In Memoriam" and "Maud" may be placed in juxtaposition, as showing the two opposing elements in the struggle we have noted. The first exhibits the poet under the mellowing, sweetening, and broadening influence of a great sorrow, which takes him out of himself, swallows up all lesser and more selfish emotions, and disposes him to look out upon the world with gentle charity and sympathy. In "Maud," on the other hand, the morbid mood has free vent. The poet loses

his grip upon himself and finds a safety-valve through which his pent-up emotions escape with a shriek. Maud, to be sure, is put in the mouth of a madman, an effort is made to give it a dramatic form, but the effort is a failure, and you feel that the poet is simply hiding behind a mask to give himself freer play.

But of the poems in which the struggle and the victory are both celebrated, the most magnificent and characteristic is "Locksley Hall." The hero has been jilted, he is sore and wretched, and he abandons himself to his mood. He denounces the girl, her parents, her lover, the dreams of his boyhood, the whole social order. But he recovers himself, recognizes the wildness of his words, and schools himself to self-conquest by dwelling on the insignificance of the individual, the mighty meaning of the race, and the splendid future unfolding before it. With advancing age, however, Tennyson has lost the power of self-conquest. "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" is a woful jeremiade. The poet lets his gloom dominate him. He looks around him, and his weary eye sees only crime, vice, horror, wretchedness. The world is once more out of joint.

Browning has a broader and more virile

mentality. His "Sordella" is the picture of an idealist, a visionary, who teaches himself to emerge from his dreams and his seclusion into the world of active life ; he is a man of thought who realizes what greatness lies in action, who finds, in the words of "Faust" after his regeneration, that the world means something to the capable. In an earlier poem, Browning thus proclaims his belief in humanity :

Progress is

The law of life : man's self is not yet Man !  
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end  
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,  
While only here and there a star dispels  
The darkness, here and there a towering mind  
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows : when the host  
Is out at once to the despair of night,  
When all mankind alike is perfected,  
I say begins man's general infancy,—  
Equal in full-blown powers,—then, not till then.

That extraordinary woman who called herself George Eliot has done excellent missionary work against the Grand, the Gloomy, and the Peculiar. Humanity was more to her than the greatest genius. Genius itself was only interesting as a revelation of what humanity could do. Her poem "Armgarth" is a protest against the idea that Providence has any pets, that genius has prerogatives from which the humblest is excluded. She had none of the hauteur of the

intellectual aristocrat. She recoiled vehemently from the spirit which identifies the excellent with the exceptional. In "Middlemarch" she alludes, with a fine and noble sarcasm, to the gentlemen who "have made an amazing figure in literature by general discontent with the universe as a trap of dulness into which their great souls have fallen by mistake; but the sense of a stupendous self and an insignificant world may have its consolations."

THE END.









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